

# IN THESE TIMES

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Joan Didion

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## MALLAISE

Mitterrand's

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## SPACE WARS

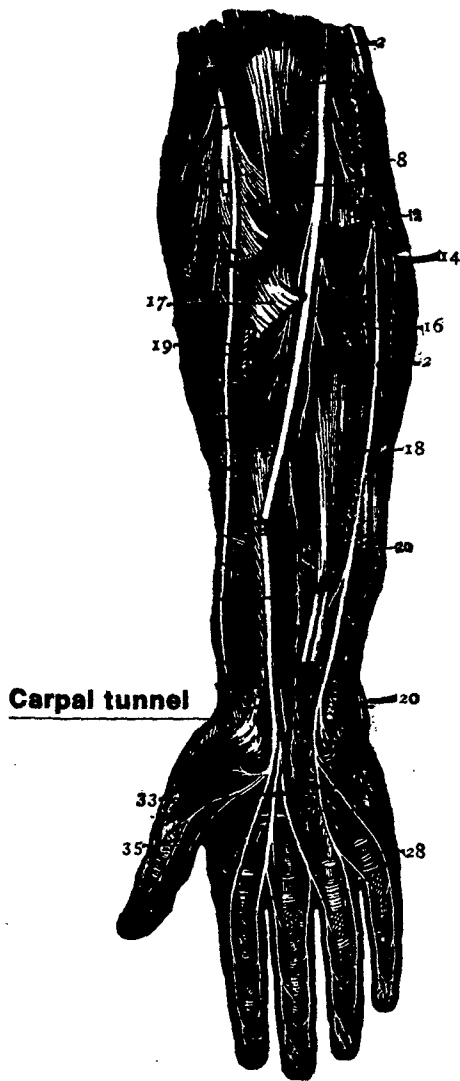
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Lionel Delvingne



# THE INSIDE STORY



## Arms and L'Eggs: workers organize around job ailments

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

Rose Bennett faithfully came to work at the Rockingham, N.C., factory of Hanes knitwear last December 7, just as she had for the past 12 years. She took her place at the sewing machine, ready to seize L'Eggs nylon stockings in one hand, the gusset—or crotch—portion in the other, and sew the pantyhose together. In a normal day she would sew 100 dozen stockings, each with the same grasping and turning movements of her hands and arms.

On that day the stockings coming down the line were Big Mommas, larger and more difficult than standard pantyhose. For the past year she had contended with a growing weakness in her hands, and in November she had noticed cysts were developing. But there were few other jobs around that could compare with the pay she made if she really pushed herself—up to \$8 an hour.

Suddenly as she was sewing the Big Mommas, her arms became very tired. Then they became paralyzed. "I told my girlfriend I couldn't move my arms," she said. "She finished things up. I went to the doctor, and that's when he said I was probably suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome. I just couldn't sew anymore."

Carpal tunnel syndrome—a disabling occupational disorder caused by scarring and swelling damaging the nerve in the central passage, or carpal tunnel, of the wrist—is only one of a number of ailments lumped together as "repeated trauma disorders." Tendonitis and bursitis are other examples. All are caused by the repeated stresses of the grasping, turning, twisting and pushing of assembly line work, such as the garment, auto, electronics and other industries.

Although recognized for at least four decades by occupational health experts, unions and workers have only recently focused on these potentially crippling illnesses. "These disorders are as serious to garment workers as roof fall-ins in a coal mine or explosions in a chemical factory," said Eric Frumin, health and safety director of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU). "It can do damage that prevents a worker from earning his livelihood."

Two nuns from the Sisters of the Divine Providence are leading the investigation of tendonitis and related problems at Hanes plants. Sisters Imelda Maurer and Bernie Galvin sought the assignment that led them to Bennettsville in 1981. Bennettsville is a poor town of 9,000 in the center of a region where cotton farming was recently mechanized, driving many people from agricultural work. As Maurer and Galvin made the rounds of homes there, they found many women and men who had been working in the Hanes hosiery factory suffered from similar pains, numbness, weakness, temporary paralysis and swelling in the hands, wrists and arms.

They began to investigate and concluded that Hanes was drastically under-reporting the incidence of tendonitis. In the year ending July 3, 1982, Hanes claimed there were only 29 cases among its 18,000 workers. But a survey made by employees of just one-third of the 6,100 workers in eight southern plants turned up 137 instances of tendonitis-like symptoms. An occupational health specialist, Dr. Peter Orris, reviewed Hanes' Occupational Safety and Health Administration records, which some workers regard as incomplete. On the basis of symptoms reported there, he estimated that it was likely there were at least 150 cases among those 6,100 workers.

The two religious women organized a Citizens Commission on Justice at Hanes that convened on March 21 in Chicago, home of the corporate parent of Hanes, Consolidated Foods Corporation. There Maurer charged that Hanes was involved in a "coverup"—failing to record some cases, using descriptions such as "painful left hand" instead of tendonitis—and that the company was trying to deny workers' compensation for some afflicted workers.

Now they are working with allies from women's groups, labor and others to force Hanes to open itself to investigation by an independent fact-finding commission and to improve health and safety conditions in their factories.

But the campaign has significance beyond improving the lives of Hanes workers and making the public more aware of a new occupational danger. If workers organize themselves to defend their well-being, they may conclude that it is worth remaining organized—in a union.

One of the strongest local workers groups fighting tendonitis is in Galax, Va. ACTWU won a union election at the Galax Hanes plant in 1979, but the National Labor Relations Board overturned the victory on the basis of union leaflets attacking the company's lawyer as a "shyster."

Galax worker Mary Jennings, the sole support of her family, told the Commission how tendonitis affects her. "I have had wrist pain on and off for the last year or so," she said. "The pain is almost a pain where you want to cry. It is a really sharp pain starting in my wrist and then shooting up to my elbow. The pain is so sharp that it can keep me awake all night, just like a toothache. Ordinarily I cook, wash dishes and do other chores. When the pain gets bad, I can't do anything."

When she complained, the company eventually cut

the work, but also the pay of Jennings and every other worker in the department. "I guess they thought that this was a good way to discourage workers from reporting tendonitis problems by cutting all their fellow workers a dollar or more an hour." She also said that she knew dozens of people who clearly had tendonitis problems that were not listed on company safety logs.

Maurer says that tendonitis problems are particularly bad at Hanes because the company has pushed the minute division of labor and old principles of "scientific management" to greater extremes than at most comparable factories. When that is combined with piecework pay, which starts with a low base of \$4.50 an hour, the chances of developing tendonitis are accentuated.

Hanes is the leading women's hosiery maker (L'Eggs, Underalls and Hanes Too!) and the second biggest men's underwear manufacturer in the U.S. Consolidated Foods, which bought Hanes in 1979, is a major consumer products company, with a return on investment of 17.3 percent in the 1982 fiscal year on sales of more than \$6 billion. Among their products are Sara Lee, Electrolux, Popsicle, Shasta soda, Fuller Brush and other common brands.

Such a high-profile company is vulnerable to public opinion, although a boycott is not yet planned. But women's groups in particular have been recruited, not only because of conditions for Hanes factory workers in the South, but also because of alleged discrimination in pay and promotion for drivers and sales personnel in urban centers and because of criticism of Hanes advertising by Women Against Pornography.

Although Hanes officials declined to testify before the Citizens Commission, the corporation flew three top officials and a consultant from the South to be available to answer reporters' questions. Hanes was cited by OSHA in 1980 for using work methods that produced tendonitis, and its own consultant and its insurance company criticized various procedures. Although engineering changes were made, on March 7 the Virginia state OSHA found continuing problems and a need for more engineering changes to meet "the spirit of the agreement." Surgery can relieve some tendonitis problems, but the only cure and prevention is change in the work.

Robert C. Radcliffe, Hanes vice-president for Human Resources, said the charges by the two nuns and the workers were "unsubstantiated." "If we're doing something improperly, we need to know about it," he said. "We don't challenge the issue that there are things to be addressed. We are in the forefront. We're not involved in a coverup. In the end, we're not a bad company."

Although Sisters Maurer and Galvin and the campaign for worker health at Hanes have no direct connection with the union, workers' experience in organizing themselves could make them more willing to join ACTWU, which quietly continues to reach workers in the Hanes mills. Although engineering changes are needed and may help, many occupational health experts as well as union organizers contend that changes in the organization of work, the workload, the pay system and workers' ability to challenge management are necessary to address the problem. Now many workers report that they do not mention health problems because they fear losing pay or even their jobs.

"I'm anti-union, but the company has made me pro-union," Rose Bennett said, as she sat with elastic bandages wrapped around her lean black arms. "With this company I think we'll have to have an outsider." ■

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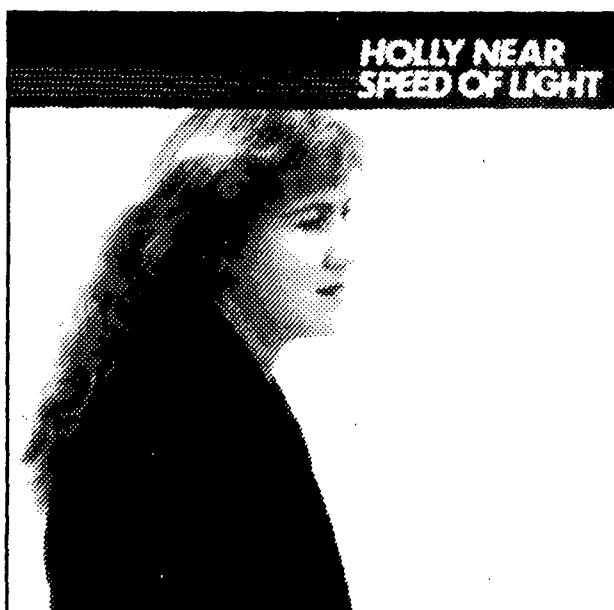
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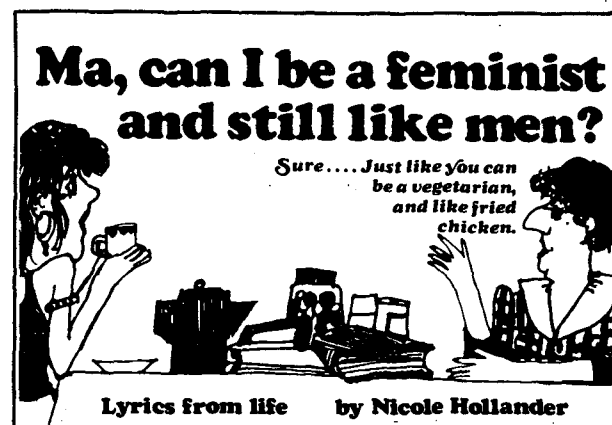
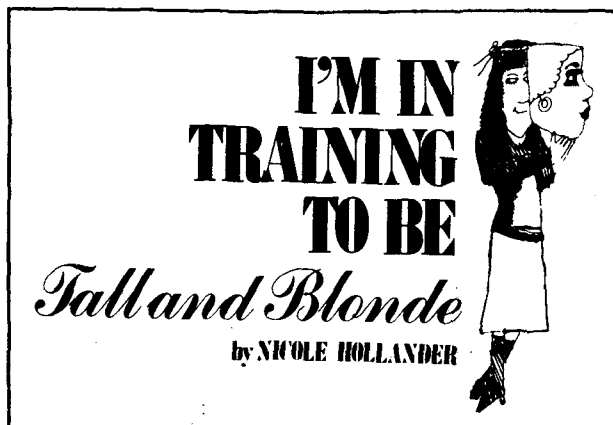
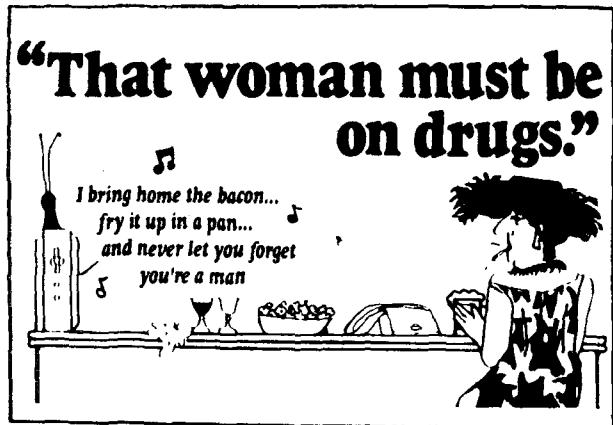
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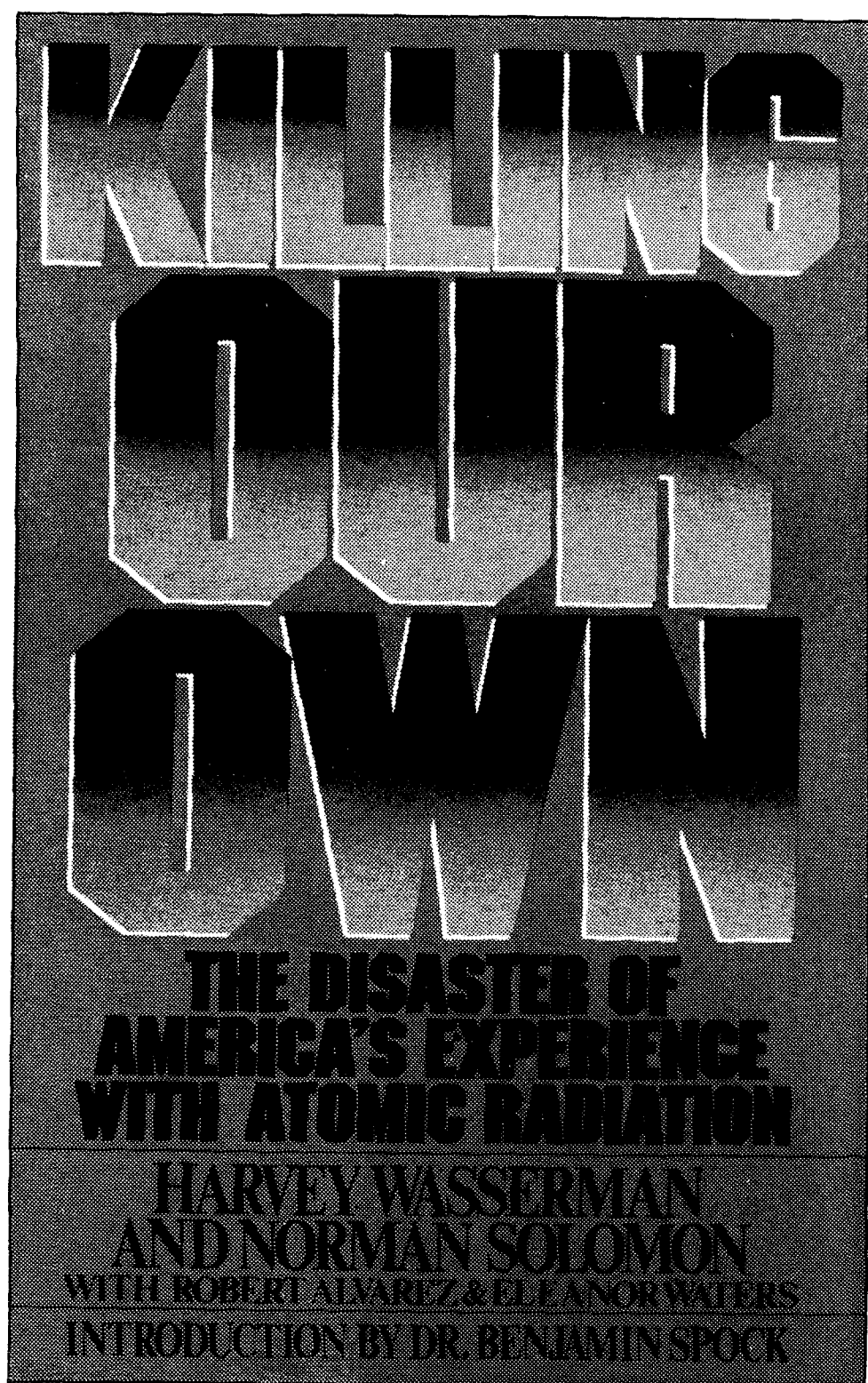
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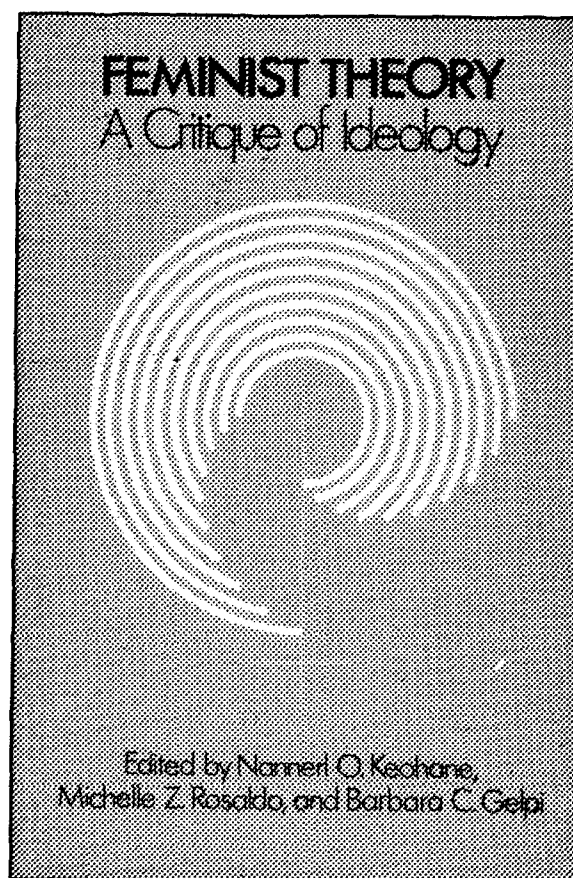
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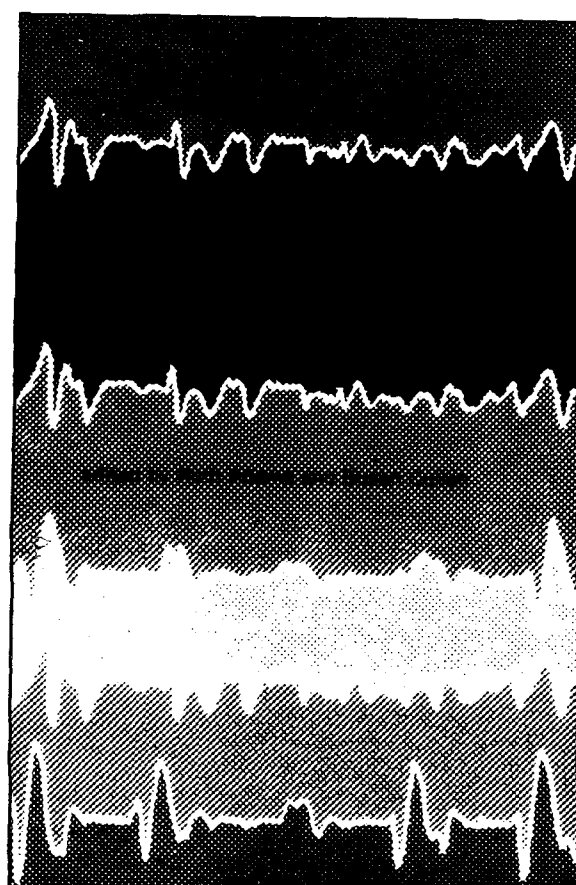
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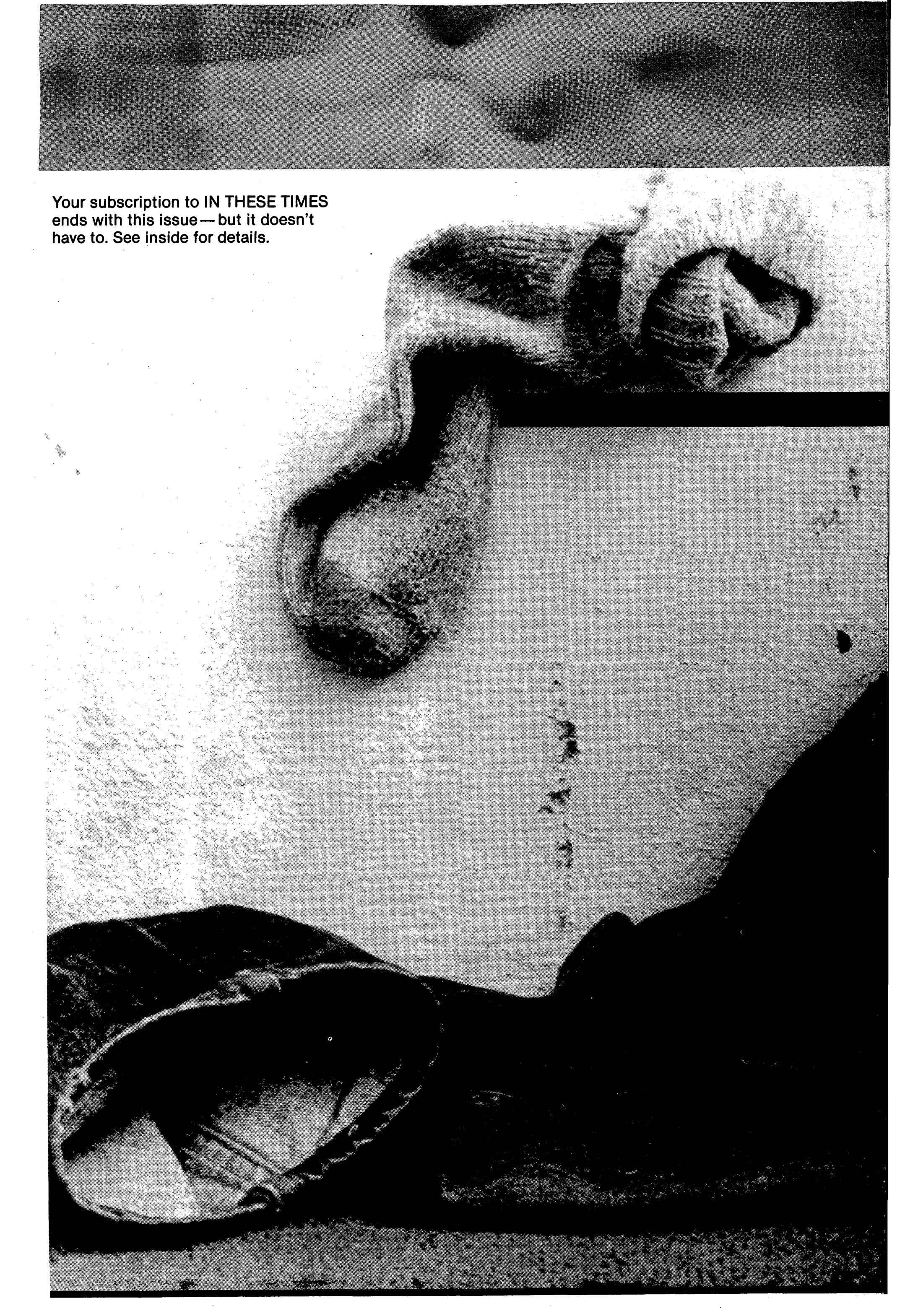
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## IN THESE TIMES

# U.S. strategy for El Salvador is too little, too late

By Marc Cooper

SAN SALVADOR

**A**LTHOUGH REAGAN ADMINISTRATION officials in Washington and U.S. embassy officials here continue to insist that they are searching for a "political solution" to the Salvadoran conflict, the U.S. is essentially relying on a military strategy. Major "political reforms" being undertaken by the Salvadoran government, under direct pressure from Washington, tend to exclude the opposition forces from any chance of participating in the political process. Thus the prospects of a negotiated political settlement appear more remote than ever.

Embassy officials here do not deny recently published reports that the administration is "rethinking" its overall strategy and developing a new, two-pronged approach to redefining the military side of the war while escalating U.S. economic assistance in the form of military-civic action programs. The new approach has frequently been compared to the CORDS program established in Vietnam that eventually led to the sealing off of the rural population into strategic hamlets.

U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) representatives in El Salvador discount the Vietnam comparison, but admit that the reworking of U.S. policy will have three basic features:

- thousands of freshly U.S.-trained troops will soon make a major attempt to wipe out FMLN guerrilla positions in the eastern provinces of Morazan, San Vicente and Usulután;
- those military operations will be followed by massive economic reconstruction programs put in place by AID and the Salvadoran government; and
- these areas will be pacified by the deployment of locally based military units that will "saturate" the countryside.

The push to speed up Salvadoran presidential elections (recently rescheduled for November of this year instead of March 1984), the offering of an amnesty to the guerrillas and the creation of a Peace Commission and a Human Rights Commission by the Salvadoran government are necessary prerequisites giving the regime the mantle of legitimacy necessary to continue obtaining military aid from a skeptical U.S. Congress.

The new military-civic action programs have begun in pilot form in the town of Berlin. Located less than 50 miles east of San Salvador, Berlin has a population of about 30,000. The town was taken over and held for four days by FMLN forces in the last week of January. For the first time in the history of the war, the Salvadoran government used its American-built A37 bombers to hit the center of town during the government's successful drive to recapture Berlin.

After having ignored the town's most urgent needs for decades, the Salvadoran government turned Berlin into a bustling center of U.S./Salvadoran economic cooperation immediately after it was recaptured.

Large multi-colored signs provided by AID now stand among the rubble of the bombed-out center of town, proclaiming a major reconstruction program is underway. Berlin has been granted about \$1 million to clear away the ruins, improve sewer systems and vaccinate the children.

A nursery school, under U.S.-financed refurbishment, has been dubbed the Clarencio Long School, in honor of the Maryland Democrat who chairs a key appropriations panel. The AID project has provided temporary jobs for about 900 townspeople who are paid \$1.50 a day.

The nearest town to Berlin is San Agustín, with a population of about 2,000. Under guerrilla control since the beginning of March, civilians in San Agustín said they are not interested in the nearby Berlin project. "What we are really concerned about is that government forces will return here and use their warplanes to bomb us, just like they did in Berlin," said one resident.

The presence of reporters in San Agustín's desolate main square recently drew a crowd of curious onlookers. Speaking more freely than people do in government-controlled areas, these residents openly voiced their fear of government forces and said they lived with much less apprehension since the local National Guard had been driven out.

Sixty miles to the northeast of Berlin, in the embattled province of Morazan, AID and the Salvadoran government have established another military-civic action program in Gualococti. On the edge of guerrilla-controlled territory, this town of 800 has been given \$25,000 to pay 120 *campesinos* to lay down flat rock on a little-used dirt road. Although Gualococti lacks water, electricity, doctors, schools and decent housing, the military commander of Morazan province, Lt. Col. Jorge Alberto Cruz, who personally oversees the program, lauded the road project for "providing jobs for the local people." One of the Salvadoran Army's most vociferous boosters of military-civic programs, Cruz argued that such economic assistance was "the key to winning over the population and in that way winning the war."

## Beans and bullets.

Although liberal members of the U.S. Congress are quick to defend economic assistance programs for El Salvador—as opposed to purely military ones—inside El Salvador it is the far-right sectors that promote military-civic action programs. Cruz, while arguing fervently for closer cooperation between the military and the civilian population, said he learned his lesson while serving for two years as an instructor at the police academy in Santiago, Chile. He said Chile should serve as

## Religious and relief workers in the embattled areas say that Salvadoran army casualties have never been higher.

a model for El Salvador and agreed with Chilean President Pinochet's self-definition as the "number one defender of the poor."

The first large-scale military-civic experiment in El Salvador was carried out by Col. Sigfredo Ochoa, who until he led a short-lived rebellion against the army's high command, was the commander of the province of Cabanas. Employing what he called a "beans and bullets" strategy—a name borrowed from similar programs pushed by Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt—Ochoa recently took great pride in showing reporters how civilians and soldiers in his zone actively cooperated with each other. What was not mentioned in public, however, was that the civilian aid programs followed some of the most brutal scorched-earth military sweeps in the history of El Salvador. The remnants of Ochoa's drives—thousands of homeless and widowed civilians—show up as a major component in the dozens of refugee camps throughout the country. Ochoa is now in Washington as part of the compromise worked out to end his dispute with army officials. (Ochoa reportedly is a leading

a series of politically compromising conditions would have to be met by the guerrillas before accepting the offer. For example, guerrillas would have to file sworn statements detailing their area of combat as well as identifying their comrades-in-arms.

The government claims that the amnesty would also free some political prisoners. "But not many of us," said an FDR member from inside Mariona prison, where more than 700 people are being held in the political section. "The amnesty will cover only those prisoners serving a term of three years or less," the FDR member added. "But most of us are being held under decree 507, which allows us to be held indefinitely without charges or sentences. Very few of us will be affected by the amnesty."

If the amnesty would not produce either guerrilla surrenders or the freeing of political prisoners, what is its purpose? "We believe it is basically a political move to make the government seem more reasonable," said Maria Julia Fernandez, director of the Legal Assistance Office of the San Salvador Catholic Archdiocese.

The amnesty proposal was authored by

*The prospects of a negotiated settlement in El Salvador appear more remote than ever.*



contender for the presidential nomination of the National Republican Alliance [ARENA], El Salvador's most right-wing party.)

Government control over the country's eastern provinces has declined while guerrilla-controlled zones have increased. The FMLN's ability to carry out coordinated, multi-faceted offensives has improved dramatically. The FMLN transmitter, Radio Venceremos, now broadcasts nightly on FM from inside San Salvador as well as from guerrilla-controlled Morazan on short wave. In mid-March it claimed that the government forces had suffered a staggering 1,000 casualties in just the first 10 weeks of the year.

Although it is impossible to document the guerrillas' claim (the government releases no official body count), a number of religious and relief workers residing in the embattled areas confirmed that army casualties have never been higher. They also confirmed an FMLN claim—launched in the last days of March—that the guerrillas nearly wiped out an entire company (130 men) of the elite, U.S.-trained Belloso Battalion during a recent 12-hour battle in San Isidro, Morazan.

The religious workers pointed to the defeat of the Belloso Battalion as an indication that what is lacking among the government forces is not more equipment, but "morale and popular support."

The Salvadoran government's deteriorating military position undermines its recent amnesty proposal. As one FMLN fighter in San Agustín put it, "Why should we surrender when we are winning the war?" Even Lt. Col. Cruz in Morazan admitted that the amnesty, which will be made official in the coming weeks, will have "little effect" on the war. In addition, the proposed draft of the amnesty law, secured in mid-March, indicates that

Don Francisco Quinonez, a middle-aged, U.S.-educated businessman who made his fortune selling fertilizer to the country's elite landowners. Secretary General of the extreme rightist Salvadoran Popular Party, Quinonez is also the most prominent member of the government's newly created Peace Commission. There are few spokespeople for the Salvadoran regime, other than Quinonez, who better illustrate its two-track approach to the future—promising an array of political solutions, but preferring the military option.

"Even though guerrillas and leftists should have no place in our society, they are, after all, Salvadorans and should be permitted to return to productive lives," Quinonez said referring to the proposal. The Peace Commission—pointed to recently by the Reagan administration as a sincere effort by the Salvadoran government to seek "reconciliation"—has done nothing in its first three months except produce the amnesty proposal.

This relatively inactive Commission might seem like a whirlwind of initiative compared to the government's Human Rights Commission. Established in December, this latter body has not yet denounced a single human rights abuse by government forces. The chief of the National Police—the security agency that is widely considered responsible for the largest number of "political disappearances"—sits on the Human Rights Commission's board of directors.

Meanwhile, the independent El Salvador Human Rights Commission (CDHES), established in 1978, continues to document ongoing rights abuses, although it has been forced into a nearly clandestine operation by government repression. On March 13, CDHES Presi-

*Continued on page 6*



# IN SHORT

## Not enough shovels

The Minnesota legislature is pondering some landmark legislation that would ban the use of state or local funds for nuclear evacuation planning or facilities, Dick Dahl reports. Calling evacuation plans "a waste of scarce public funds," the bill, introduced by Democratic-Farmer-Labor representative Lee Greenfield, passed the House Committee on Government Operations 17-4 in March. Speakers ridiculed President Reagan's Crisis Relocation Plan in the House debate. One representative asked how Minnesota residents would find dirt to shovel onto their fallout shelters—a centerpiece of the plan—in the dead of winter. Federal representatives acknowledged they needed to iron out some kinks in the plan. The bill's most serious drawback is that it could jeopardize the other crisis assistance funds the state receives from Washington, but supporters think they can get around that. If the bill becomes law, Minnesota would be the first state to formally disconnect itself from the Reagan plan.

## No family feud

One April municipal election brought an Epton victory and a Republican mayor, but the city wasn't Chicago and the Epton isn't a Republican—he's the socialist son of Chicago mayoral contender Bernard Epton. Jeff Epton, a 35-year-old veteran of the antiwar movement, won an Ann Arbor City Council seat by 52 votes. Despite their political differences, the elder Epton describes his son as "a man of integrity," and Jeff Epton says he'll campaign in Chicago if his father asks him to. Now there are three socialists on the university city's 11-member Council. A centrist Democrat lost to the Republican mayoral candidate.

In Ypsilanti, Mich., socialist mayor Pete Murdock, appointed mayor by the City Council last December, won his seat in an April 4 election. As in Ann Arbor, three socialists sit on the 11-member Council in Ypsilanti, where 22 percent of the city's 23,000 residents are out of work. Major campaign issues, Eric Jackson reports, were preserving the city's historic downtown and restricting the tax abatements the city awards to corporations operating there.

## Count them out

West Germans, who recently marched in record numbers to protest the nuclear threat, are organizing against a lesser menace—the country's census. Alarmed that the census, scheduled for April 27, will collect unprecedented personal information, some German citizens have asked that it be revised. John Torpey reports that the cities of Hamburg and Bremen have already unsuccessfully petitioned the Bundestag for a postponement and revision of the census, and several legal challenges have failed. So citizens groups are organizing a boycott of the census, and representatives met in late March to plan a strategy. Although the West German government is promising to prosecute boycotters, the offense is comparable to a misdemeanor and would carry only a small fine.

## Rejecting the "R-Project"

Competition for federal research funding is usually fierce among university laboratories, but at Stanford University in Palo Alto two physics labs may wind up feuding because one wants no part of a joint \$6 million military research project. The controversial proposal, Lenny Siegel reports, is the development of the "R-Project," President Reagan's proposed nuclear-powered X-ray laser system. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory outside Berkeley will direct the research, but wants Stanford Synchrotron Research lab to work on the project's X-ray detectors. Stanford Synchrotron, in turn, needs the backing of Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, but the center doesn't conduct direct military research and a sizeable chunk of its staff wants to keep it that way. Almost 300 staff members have signed petitions objecting to the center's involvement with the project.

But John Harris, deputy head of operations for the center, thinks the opposition is futile. "If the Energy Department really wants [the center involved], then it will probably get its way.... Those Stanford people who oppose the weapons research will probably have to challenge the R-Project and the philosophy behind it."

## Dubious distinction

In the rivalry between the East and West coasts, the east can claim at least one unchallenged distinction—the largest concentration of the country's poorer congressional districts. More than half of New York's congressional districts, and nearly half of Pennsylvania's, fall within the poorest third of the country's districts. So does almost every district in North and South Carolina. By contrast, not one of the Pacific states contains a district in the bottom third. The congressional district survey, completed by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, concluded, "The center cities of the Midwest and East have replaced rural areas of Appalachia and the South on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder."

—Joan Walsh

## Divestment bill to Congress?

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A proposed Washington, D.C., bill prohibiting municipal investment in firms doing business with South Africa may provide the most significant national test yet of pro-divestment sentiment, by forcing congressional committees that oversee the district's government to vote on the bill.

Introduced in January, the D.C. bill is the broadest municipal divestment bill to be introduced in the nation. It would bar deposits of city funds in banks that have lent to the South African government or to banks and corporations active there. It would also require the city's pension funds and housing finance agency to sell their holdings in any bank or corporation

with financial or investment ties to South Africa.

The bill elicited overwhelmingly strong community support, particularly from local churches and some labor unions, during the March 3-4 hearings. Rev. Dan Purnell, testifying in support of exempting "Sullivan signatories" from the bill, repeatedly had to reiterate that "we do not oppose divestment" in the face of widespread negative audience reaction and critical questions from several City Council members.

A major concern of D.C. City Council members, as of many city and state legislators, was the economic viability of alternative investments. Investment advisers from Shearson/American Express and Franklin Management Corporation, testifying in favor of the bill, noted several new investment funds that are getting equal or greater returns from financing non-South Africa related companies as well as gener-

ating new jobs and revitalizing local neighborhoods.

Opposition to the bill came primarily from the D.C. Pension Board, which reportedly voted along racial lines in deciding to oppose the bill. (Two board members also work for financial institutions that have made past loans to South Africa.) Opposition from the mostly white Fire Fighters Association highlighted simmering tensions between it and the mostly black Progressive Fire Fighters Union, which wants to become the bargaining agent for firefighters and supports the divestment bill.

Stanford Parris, conservative Republican representative from northern Virginia, has announced he will work to overturn the legislation in Congress if it passes the D.C. City Council. His statements provoked renewed controversy over the issue of home rule for the district and strong criticism from several Council members.

—Carole Collins



Wilson Riles Jr. is seeking re-election to the Oakland City Council.

## Oakland vote tests left

OAKLAND, CALIF.—Oakland residents will elect a new City Council April 19 in an important test of the growing strength of the local left. For the first time since 1909, voters will choose a majority of their Council members on a district, rather than an at-large basis. While a black Council majority in this 40 percent-black city is more likely than a left one, current political alignments on downtown development and other key local issues could shift significantly.

The Oakland Progressive Political Alliance (OPPA), founded a year and a half ago, is facing its first electoral test. OPPA is supporting black candidates in three of the five non-partisan council races. Its active involvement in this election continues the battle between the city's left coalition

and an entrenched business leadership, fought out in several important recent elections including Mayor Lionel Wilson's 1977 win as Oakland's first black mayor, the defeat of a business-sponsored special police tax and two losing rent control campaigns. The shift from citywide to district elections was an important victory for the progressive alliance.

The OPPA candidates include incumbent Wilson Riles Jr., fighting to avoid a runoff against five opponents; East Oakland resident Mary Meredith and bilingual junior high school teacher and neighborhood organizer Cassie Lopez. Lopez' challenge to white incumbent Marge Gibson in the traditionally liberal-to-left District One is OPPA's most critical test in the election.

District One, bordering the city of Berkeley, has overwhelmingly supported Representative Ron Dellums and left-liberal California Assemblymember Tom Bates, and is a stronghold of OPPA membership. Lopez and Gib-

son must attract support from a broad spectrum of voters. The district is nearly half black, but contains some of the wealthiest white neighborhoods in Oakland and several gentrifying enclaves of young professionals and white collar workers.

In a city with 12 percent unemployment and the promise of extensive new commercial development, the individual election campaigns have focused largely on the costs and benefits of new development and the city's role in supporting private development. Lopez, Riles and Meredith have pointed out that, although thousands of new jobs may be created in the next several years, fewer than three in 10 will go to Oakland residents. They argue for an end to unnecessary subsidies to developers and job guarantees for Oakland residents through binding development agreements. Riles and Lopez have also stressed the need to develop community-based crime control strategies and measures to preserve affordable housing, including important tenant protection such as just-cause eviction legislation.

While Riles is expected to win re-election, Lopez faces a tougher race in District One. Meredith faces two better-financed, better publicized opponents. Mayor Wilson, elected with strong support from the left but coopted by business and landlords, is supporting Gibson. Wilson is also opposing Riles, who is seen as a potential mayoral challenger in the 1985 election. The mayor and Gibson have joined to "Berkeley-bait" Riles and Lopez for allegedly seeking help from Berkeley Citizen Action (BCA), the Berkeley left's electoral organization. Ironically, BCA members worked hard in the Mayor's first campaign five years ago.

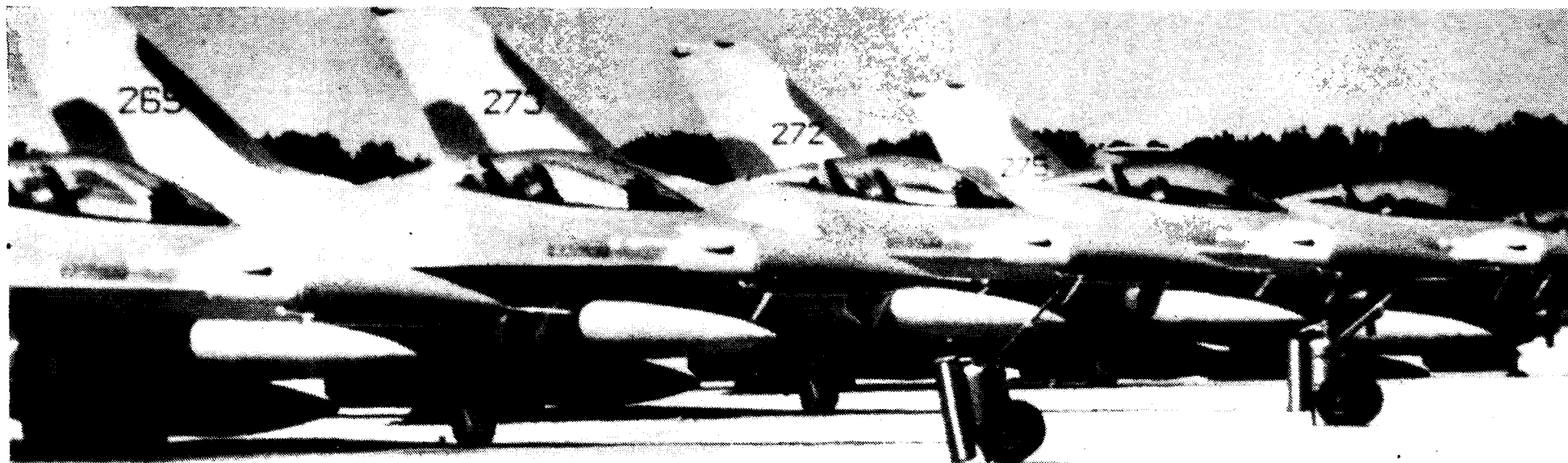
The question is which coalition of forces will rule Oakland: the moderate Democrat-Republican establishment dominated by business and represented by the Mayor and Gibson, or the left coalition of Ron Dellums, Tom Bates and the OPPA candidates. Whatever the outcome of this month's election, the progressive alliance is gaining strength and electoral experience crucial to their continuing challenge to win control of Oakland's city government.

—Marc Beyeler



## CENTRAL AMERICA

## Israeli arms pipeline bolsters rightists



Azz-Woodlin Camp

By Steve Goldfield, Jane Hunter and Paul Glickman

SAN FRANCISCO

**A**S THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION campaigns for more military aid to El Salvador and reports of U.S. covert activities in Nicaragua unfold, the debate over U.S. involvement in Central America is once again on the front pages. But lost in the arguments pro and con is a little-known but crucial factor: Israel.

More than 8,000 miles away, Israel has been arming Central American (and other) dictators since 1967. It provided 83 percent of El Salvador's military purchases between 1972-80, almost 100 percent of Guatemala's arms between 1977-81 (during a U.S. embargo), and about 98 percent of Nicaragua's arms in the last year of dictator Anastasio Somoza's rule. Israeli military sales to Central America are on the increase, more than doubling in the past five years.

Because its burgeoning arms industry is an important source of income, Israel has become a willing participant in Cold War geopolitics. In 1981 Israeli cabinet member Ya'acov Meridor told U.S. officials, "Do not compete against us in the Caribbean or in any other country where you can't operate in the open. Give us the opportunity to do this and trust us with sales of ammunition and military hardware. Let Israel act as your agent."

And Israel is the favored agent of Central American dictators when internal political pressures limit official U.S. involvement in the region. As early as 1981, British and Israeli newspapers pointed to the presence of Israeli military personnel—probably pilot trainers—on a Honduran base. It was reported that Honduras wished to improve its aging fleet of aircraft by acquiring the new Kfir hardware, whose electronic apparatus would allow it to confuse Nicaraguan defenses. That was one of the reasons for the quasi-secret visit of Honduran army commander, General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, in Israel in July 1982. Fearing U.S. congressional refusal to sell American aircraft to his regime, the general had been forced to consider acquiring aircraft other than American F-5s.

Israel also plays a crucial role in regionalizing the Central American conflict. Honduras, which borders Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, received 12 Dassault Fighters, four Arava transports, a Westwind Reconnaissance Plane, armored cars, patrol boats and other weapons from Israel during the '70s. Israeli aid, added to planes acquired from other countries, has made Honduras Central America's main air power.

In December 1982 Honduras hosted both President Reagan and former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. A high-level Honduran officer told the *Christian Science Monitor* that "Sharon's trip was more positive. He sold us arms. Reagan only uttered platitudes, explaining that

Congress was preventing him from doing more." This same officer reported an agreement with Israel on military hardware (including advanced fighter planes) and training. He added that a second phase of the deal may involve more sophisticated weapons, such as missiles. Both countries initially denied signing an accord, but in December Sharon said an Israeli delegation would soon sign a security agreement with Honduras.

#### Israel in Salvador.

Although U.S. colonial presence in El Salvador dates back almost a century, in the last decade Israel supplied much of the arms and training to its right-wing regimes. Only in the past two years, when U.S. military aid resumed, did U.S. planes and helicopters begin to appear

prominent role. Israel's many advisers in Guatemala assist in the Guatemalan rural pacification program, known as "Beans and Bullets." In the past three years many Guatemalans, including military officers, have won scholarships to study "agricultural development" in Israel.

#### Israel in Costa Rica.

The increasing frequency of contacts between Israel and Costa Rica is another sign of Israel's growing military presence in the region. Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir was dispatched to Costa Rica in October 1982, following the May visit of Finance Minister Yoram Aridor. At the time Shamir announced that Israel would supply and train a Costa Rican "police force." (Following the Vietnam war, Congress prohibited the U.S. train-

ing for International Development will ask Congress for \$10 million to finance the settlement for the first year. Israel will provide the technical expertise, presumably based on its experience with settlements in the West Bank area." Anderson commented, "The Costa Rican border settlement, combined with the military buildup in Honduras, would create a giant strategic pincers physically isolating Nicaragua by land."

Israeli military and economic aid to Costa Rica began the day after the victory of the National Liberation Party, affiliated with the Socialist International, in Costa Rica's February, 1982 elections. That day Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the new president of Costa Rica, Luis Alberto Monge, met in Washington. According to Monge's statements to the *Washington Post*, Begin assured him that Israel was "very desirous of helping him" in matters of security. In response, Monge admitted that he preferred "the assistance of Israel in matters of security to that of others." Then on November 1, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* revealed that Israel was ready to provide, with Washington's approval, a fence with electronic detection devices along the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

The Israeli-Costa Rican plan of cooperation covers economic matters as well. In April 1982, Costa Rican Vice-President Alberto Fajitz Lizano was in Jerusalem asking the Israeli government to help his country benefit from Israel's numerous ties to the U.S. business community. He was reportedly looking for \$500 million for construction of an inter-oceanic railway that would eventually take the place of the Panama Canal.

Although short of capital, Israel indicated that it was interested in helping.

*Continued on following page*

**Israeli export figures are classified information. But European peace institutes estimate from 25-40 percent of Israel's exports are military supplies.**

among the Israel-supplied Salvadoran fleet. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute conservatively estimates that El Salvador's air force includes 18 Dassault Fighters, 17 Arava Transport planes and six Fouga Magister Trainers. As in Somoza's Nicaragua, the Uzi submachine gun and the Galil assault rifle are used by Salvadoran soldiers.

Israel may have more advisers in El Salvador than the U.S. does. The Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) ambassador to Nicaragua claims that about 100 Israelis are stationed at a secret base near San Salvador, instructing Salvadoran officers in counterinsurgency tactics. While many would discount such a source, earlier PLO reports of Israeli arms shipments to Nicaragua's Somoza proved correct.

According to former Salvadoran Army Colonel Francisco Guerra y Guerra, undersecretary of the interior in the 1979-80 junta, Israeli advisers were attached to then-President Romero's secret police (ANSESAL) in the mid-'70s. And Roberto D'Aubuisson, now president of the Constituent Assembly, once served as a minor ANSESAL officer. ANSESAL survived Romero's downfall and is still in operation.

According to Arnaldo Ramos, U.S. representative for the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), the Salvadoran government has an Israeli computer system in San Salvador. Ex-minister Guerra y Guerra confirmed Ramos' charge, saying that in 1978 Israeli consultants assisted the Salvadorans in planning and then installing a computer system.

Another Israeli-installed computer reportedly processes data in Guatemala City, where Israel plays an even more

ing internal police forces of other countries). Israeli training has now begun in Costa Rica and, according to Arnaldo Ramos, U.S. representative for the FDR in El Salvador, 100 Costa Ricans are being trained in Israel.

On February 14, columnist Jack Anderson reported on a multi-million dollar U.S.-Israeli "land development" project to buy up "land along the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border, clearing roads through the wilderness and moving in thousands of settlers.... The U.S. Agency

**Israel provided 83 percent of El Salvador's military purchases between 1972-80 and almost 100 percent of Guatemala's arms between 1977-81.**





# Israel

*Continued from preceding page*

Costa Rica's ambassador to Israel, Karen Olsen Beck, revealed in October that during his stay in the U.S., President Monge had been introduced to important people in the American Jewish Committee and officials of B'nai B'rith, who promised him support in Costa Rica's negotiations with 66 American banks to rearrange the terms of its debt.

Israel's cooperation has not gone unrewarded on the diplomatic front. In particular, since President Monge assumed his new function in May of last year, he has announced that the Costa Rican ambassador to Israel would return to Jerusalem. More than two years ago, Costa Rica was among 13 Latin American countries that moved their embassies to Tel Aviv when Israel adopted the law officially annexing the quarter of Jerusalem conquered in 1967.

## Exporting military supplies.

When Israeli General Sharon visited Honduras in December, he was accompanied by General David Ivri, chief of the Israeli air force and now, since January 1, president of Israel Aircraft Industries. That firm, along with Israeli Military Industries, are Israel's two largest military companies. Both are owned by the government.

Another major arms company, Soltam, is effectively owned by the Histadrut, Israel's labor federation, which owns other arms companies among its many holdings. Private U.S. investment is also heavy in Israeli arms production, particularly in electronics, from such firms as Gerber Scientific, Control Data, Motorola and General Telephone & Electronics.

In 1971 Israel's arms production consisted of ammunition for small arms and parts for repair of foreign-produced equipment. The original rationale for the rapid shift to broad-based production was to reduce Israel's dependency on foreign suppliers. But as domestic demand for military supplies increased, so did the attraction of selling to foreign markets to pay the huge pricetag for the Israeli military machine. Since the major industrial powers produce their own arms, Israel's primary markets are in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Israeli export figures are classified. But European peace institutes estimate from 25 percent to 40 percent of Israel's total exports are military supplies. In 1981 Mordechai Tzipori, then deputy minister of defense, bragged that 1982 sales would reach \$2 billion. Total 1982 exports were about \$5 billion. The downturn in the world economy has caused Israeli arms exports to drop in 1983, and some Israelis advocate reducing arms exports to 25 percent of total exports, fearing too much dependency on such a market.

Israel's arms exports have been almost doubling every two years. In 1977 Israel exported \$285 million in arms. By 1980 Israel was the single largest arms exporter

to sub-Saharan Africa and to Central America. In 1982 the CIA ranked Israel fifth among world arms exporters. The *New York Times* ranked Israel seventh.

The U.S. has effectively set Israel up in the arms business. Aside from tax-deductible private donations, U.S. aid amounts to almost 13 percent of Israel's gross national product, about \$750 for each Israeli and about \$70 from the average American family yearly, according to former Undersecretary of State George Ball.

This makes Israel by far the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic aid. Between 1974 and 1982, Israel received \$22.5 billion in U.S. aid, \$2.7 billion in 1982 alone. About \$500 million in loans are forgiven each year.

In the Reagan foreign aid budget for fiscal 1984, Israel once again heads the list of recipients of military aid. Out of the total foreign aid request of \$14.5 billion, \$2.48 billion would go to Israel. And Congress could be even more generous. Last year when the Reagan administration requested \$785 million in economic aid for Israel, California Senator Alan Cranston moved to raise the amount to \$910 million—exactly the amount needed to service the principal and interest on Israel's outstanding \$8 billion debt to the U.S.

More than half of U.S. aid is military, though the distinction blurs when so-called economic aid displaces domestic funds, which are then diverted for military purposes. But the secret November 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation signed by Israel and the U.S. goes a step further. State Department spokesman Dean Fischer explained that Article II, section 2D of that agreement paves the way for "the possible use by third countries of American foreign military sales credits to purchase Israeli defense items and service." No other country enjoys such a privilege.

That privilege and the lack of any strong anti-interventionist pressure from inside Israel make it likely that the Begin government will continue to support U.S. allies in Central America and elsewhere. Although there have been some calls for legislation forbidding military aid to dictatorial regimes and giving some control over arms sales to the commission of foreign affairs and defense in the Knesset, those voices have not been heeded by the powerful political parties.

General Sharon's trip to Central America and Prime Minister Shamir's visit to Argentina and Uruguay reinforced the opposition of Israeli Labor Party member Yossi Sarid—the most active Labor adversary of the Likud Party—and some members of the Mapam, the civil rights movement, the Shinui and the Rakah (Communists). But with only 15 supporters, a bill restricting arms sales has no chance of being adopted in a parliament of 120 members—unless the whole Labor Party unites behind it. And thus far there are few signs that the party is ready to put its weight behind any effort to pass such a bill.

*Paul Glickman is a staff writer for Rip'n'Read news service. Steve Goldfield and Jane Hunter are freelance journalists.*

# Salvador

*Continued from page 3*

dent Marianella Garcia, along with 20 other people, was shot and killed by government troops near the town of Suchitoto.

Between 400-500 civilians are being killed each month, according to human rights organizations including the CDHES, the Catholic Church and the Jesuit University. The groups claim that of the more than 40,000 Salvadorans who died in the last three years, most of them were civilians killed by army troops, police or right-wing death squads.

Fernandez of the Church Legal Aid Office disputed Washington claims that the situation on human rights is significantly improving. "Those responsible for the killings still go unpunished," she said.

In a recent Sunday homily, the Archbishop of San Salvador, Monsenor Arturo Rivera y Damas called the government's unwillingness to punish human rights offenders a "national disgrace."

The amnesty and the establishment of Peace and Human Rights Commissions are intended to pave the way for this year's presidential elections. But a respected Salvadoran social scientist predicted that the elections "would take the country even further from peace than the March 1982 elections did." Pointing to a Jesuit University study alleging that the 1982 vote was marked by government intimidation, inflated voter rolls and the exclusion of the opposition, he foresaw the upcoming presidential elections taking place in an atmosphere of "a country occupied by its own army."

The handful of political parties that remain legal in El Salvador—which participate in the current "government of national unity"—are deeply divided among themselves. The extreme right ARENA party, led by former Army Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, now speaker of the Constituent Assembly, appears to have the political initiative. Allied with four other smaller parties, ARENA commands a working majority inside the government.

The more moderate Christian Democrats are still reeling from having fallen 10 percentage points short of capturing an absolute majority in the assembly in the March 1982 elections. Party leader and former military-appointed president, Jose Napoleon Duarte, has already begun his campaign for the presidency by recently granting a series of long interviews to reporters.

Claiming to represent the democratic center that U.S. policy ostensibly is trying to favor, Duarte portrayed himself in one interview as a champion of civil liberties. Saying that "the extreme right had created a power vacuum" and that the army was characterized by "abusing authority," he argued that social peace could be brought to El Salvador only by the election of the Christian Democrats.

But prisoners inside Mariona jail remembered that it was President Duarte

who signed decree 507 that effectively suspended all civil liberties and guarantees in the country. They also noted that during Duarte's year and a half rule—from December 1980 until May 1982—El Salvador experienced its worst repression. The El Salvador Human Rights Commission registered nearly 1,000 political deaths a month during that time.

D'Aubuisson and his party continue to label Duarte a "watermelon"—green on the outside but red on the inside. At the most recent ARENA party convention, D'Aubuisson, linked repeatedly to rightist death squads, denounced the foreign press for "orchestrating a slander campaign" against El Salvador and promised a "war of annihilation against Communist subversion."

The Christian Democrats and ARENA do agree on flatly rejecting a negotiated political settlement of the sort called for by the Catholic Church and supported by the FDR/FMLN. And U.S. embassy officials appear as unenthusiastic about such a solution as their Salvadoran government allies. One top-ranking U.S. military officer in El Salvador said even a pre-settlement "dialogue" between the government and the opposition would constitute a "sell-out."

Yet the Reagan administration is proceeding with full dispatch to increase military aid to El Salvador while pointing to ongoing "political reform" as the quid pro quo. Outside the offices of the U.S. embassy and the Salvadoran government, however, few people here believe the political reform program is anything more than window-dressing.

Dr. Wayne Smith, head of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Cuba until he quit his post with the Reagan administration last summer, predicted that within a year or two "this administration will be faced with the choice of either accepting a humiliating military defeat at the hands of the guerrillas or with having to send in massive amounts of American combat troops."

*Marc Cooper is news director of KPFK radio in Los Angeles.*

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By Diana Johnstone

P A R I S

**A**FTER LESS THAN TWO YEARS in office, President Francois Mitterrand has accepted a reversal of socialist economic policies in a strange atmosphere of hypocrisy, fatalism and passivity.

• **Hypocrisy** because the reversal has been officially presented as continuity. The austerity measures sprung on the nation March 25 were presented by Finance Minister Jacques Delors as complementary to prior policies. We have been relatively successful, he said in effect, in checking unemployment. Now we must achieve comparable results in checking inflation and reducing the whopping trade deficit—93 billion francs (about \$13 billion) in 1982.

The catch is that the austerity measures will not so much complement as undo the success of holding down unemployment. Growth is now projected at zero rather than 1.5 percent and total consumption is being cut back by around 2 percent. Nobody denies that this means recession and loss of jobs. The only hope being held out is the U.S. economic recovery that is supposed to radiate out over the Western world this year.

Left government or no left government, France, like most of the rest of Europe, is relying solely on the success of the Reagan administration and American capitalism to avert depression and spur recovery. Economists have convinced Mitterrand that he has no other choice. France cannot go it alone, he said in his address to the nation, and must remain part of Europe.

It must stay in the European Monetary System, which means giving priority to maintaining the value of the franc and means policies that give people less money to spend. Delors' measures are designed to take 65 billion francs out of the hot little hands of spendthrift French citizens and tuck them away in the state treasury. This will be done by a special "forced loan" equivalent to 10 percent of last year's income tax, a special tax of 1 percent of last year's income, higher rates for public services (telephone, electricity, trains) and higher interest rates to encourage savings—in short, the usual monetarist medicine with an attempt to spread it around fairly and not soak the poor, like Reagan and Britain's Thatcher.

There are also a couple of measures designed to stop the flow of capital abroad. Export regulations are to be tightened to retrieve payment. But the longest, loudest howl has gone up about a measure normally affecting only a minority, the 16 percent of French people who take their holidays abroad. Only 2,000 francs (about \$300) can be taken out of the country per year per adult. With this measure the Socialists have hit their own middle-class constituency in a place that may hurt almost as much as the pocketbook: the imagination. Foreign travel, and dreams of foreign travel, are a way of life here, where everyone has at least five weeks of paid annual leave. As dreams of socialism fade, the government is also shattering dreams of the Grand Canyon and Machu Picchu.

• **Fatalism** because in less than two years, the left in office has managed to liquidate its two most obvious options for dealing with the economic crisis.

First, right after Mitterrand's election in May 1981, there was a feeble stab at "launching economic recovery through popular consumption" by raising purchasing power at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. At the time this was presented primarily as a matter of social solidarity rather than as a development strategy—and indeed the left was bound by its campaign promises and the expectations of its electorate. To work as a development strategy, supply would have had to be coordinated with the increased demand, either by making sure domestic producers were ready to supply the

## FRANCE

# Bad news on economic front sets off a socialist retreat



Michel Rocard, France's new minister of agriculture

In the absence of such precautions, domestic producers were unable to fill the increased demand and the enlarged domestic market was filled by imports, helping to swell the foreign trade deficit. This was so absolutely predictable that the attempt at "launching economic recovery through popular consumption" never seemed serious—surely the government had some other more effective tricks up its sleeves. But no. Now they are saying that they hoped it would work, they tried it and it failed.

That phase ended with the June 1982 devaluation of the franc (the second since the Socialists took power) and temporary wage-and-price controls. But a second left option still seemed open. This was personified by the promotion at that time of Jean-Pierre Chevenement to minister of industry, research and technology. It was the option of economic recovery through voluntaristic use of the nationalized sector to promote reindustrialization. Yet months went by without any industrial strategy emerging. Private business owners complained that Chevenement favored the nationalized industries and the heads of the nationalized industries complained that he wanted to tell them what to do. Attentive to these complaints, Mitterrand rebuked Chevenement on February 2. Now Chevenement is out of the government and that option too is discredited—without ever having been seriously tried or, for that matter, clearly defined.

Is there a third option? If so, it has a name: Michel Rocard. Stuck on the shelf for two years as planning minister, Rocard still tops the popularity polls. Now Mitterrand has put him out in the front lines as minister of agriculture. He starts off with an immense advantage over his immediate predecessor Edith Cresson: he is a man. Although their interests were well defended in the Common Market and their income has actually increased, France's irascible farmers (or more precisely, the leaders of their more conservative organizations) were almost openly rebelling at having to deal with "la parfumeuse" (the perfumed lady), who has been rewarded for surviving peasant revolts by being given the problem ministry of foreign trade and tourism. Rocard already has a constituency in the technocracy, the cooperative sector and the French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT), and if he succeeds in building a

is being programmed by his friend Delors, whose economic policies are leading to European economic integration, zero growth and deindustrialization. This sets the stage for the rise of what is being called "the second left"—the left of post-industrial society, of the new middle classes, of qualitative change. But whereas in Germany the "second left" centers around the radical Greens, in France it is identified with Rocard, and it is more conservative in every respect.

**Socialists do not believe they can go against the forces of the world market. This does not mean they are abandoning their objectives, but that they feel under constraint. Just how much must be sacrificed to the dictates of the international capitalist economy will be at the center of debate among socialists.**

• **Passivity** because the paternalism of Mitterrand's presidency has only reinforced a passive disengagement from politics already well under way in the left and labor movements before his election. Mitterrand's style—labeled for the campaign billboards as "tranquil force"—suggests a far-seeing pilot keeping a steady course through fog and tempest. But is he really so far-seeing as he tries to make out? This latest reversal perhaps suggests that he is, above all, merely a party leader skilled at holding together various feuding factions by giving them all the illusion their chance may come.

But for all their infighting, French Socialists share a social philosophy and a general aspiration for France. They want to do something the right has never done in France: fully involve the working class in the life of the nation. They explicitly reject class struggle, much less revolution. They want harmony between classes, and this, they believe, can help strengthen France in its necessary effort to modernize and attain a favorable position in the new international division of labor. Their disagreements are only over how to achieve these objectives.

Like the population in general, they do not believe that they can go against the forces of the world market. This does not mean that they are abandoning their objectives, but that they feel under constraint. Just how much must be sacrificed to the dictates of the international capitalist economy will continue to be at the center of debate among Socialists.

A minority believes that the government has given in too easily to these pressures: the left faction of the Socialist Party led by Chevenement, called CERES (Center for Socialist Study, Research and Education). Out of the government, CERES is now free to rouse the "first left"



Finance Minister Jacques Delors

out of its torpor in opposition to Delors. The Communist Party, meanwhile, has shown it is ready to swallow anything to keep its four ministers in the government (even if three of them have lost rank).

So CERES now stands as the main champion of the "first left." It has already come out with a polemical book, *Le Socialisme et la France*, jointly authored and signed by the CERES pen name Jacques Mandrin, attacking Delors' policies and arguing for a determined reindustrialization policy. CERES can hope to win over some Mitterrandists to its viewpoint by the time the Socialist Party congress is held in the fall. Many faithful Mitterrandists joined in applauding CERES intellectual Didier Motchane (Mandrin's number one pen-pusher) when he criticized the austerity measures at a gloomy Socialist Party meeting.





## ARMS RACE

# The celestial conquistadors

By Timothy Lange & S.K. Levin

DENVER

SINCE HUMANS FIRST WONDERINGLY peered at the moon and stars, the heavens have captured the imagination. In the modern age, that ancient drive skyward has taken humans from Earthbound Galileo squinting through his crude lenses at Saturn's rings to two Voyager spacecraft that rocketed to the sixth planet's vicinity and focused computerized optics on its tiny spinning rocks.

Now, with the space age still an infant, the Soviet Union and the U.S. verge on combining the most astounding technological achievements—rocketry, television, micro-circuitry, lasers—into orbiting battle platforms that could alter human destiny. Just as Christopher Columbus was followed by the conquistadors, one pundit has said, so now will space explorers be followed by space warriors.

Both the Pentagon and Kremlin plunge recklessly ahead with plans to militarize space, each blaming the other for trying to gain superiority. The shooting hasn't begun, but the superpowers already are engaged in a battle to take the "high ground."

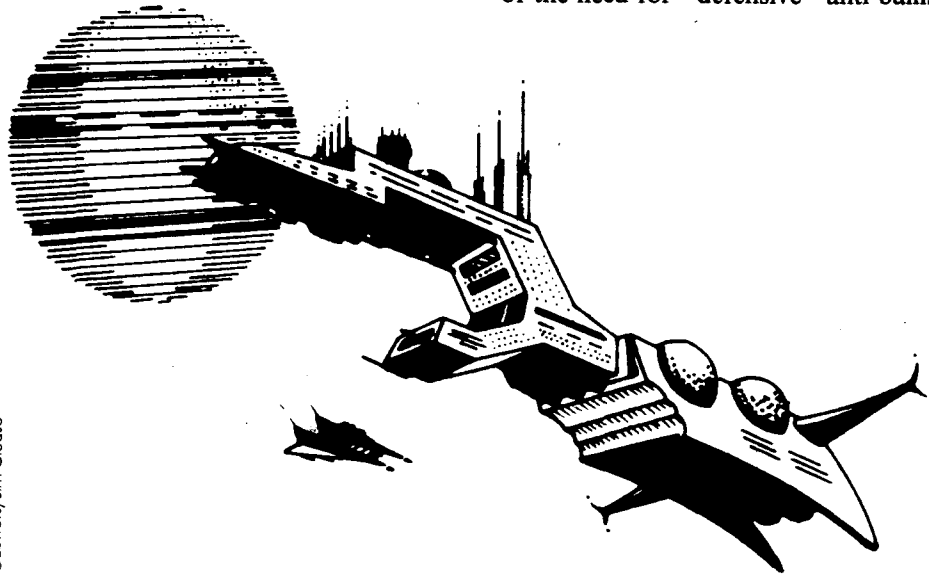
U.S. supporters of space-based arms believe that any retreat now would be tantamount to surrender. They point out that the Soviets have tested anti-satellite weapons (ASATs), have spent \$3-4 billion more than the U.S. for space programs each year and have practiced quick launches of a coordinated strike

against the U.S.

Critics note that the U.S. developed the first ASAT and will test a new one this spring, and point out that backward Soviet technology requires spending more rubles just to keep up and that the U.S. also plays nuclear war games.

news agency Tass last year, "the U.S. strategists are switching to outer space." The Pentagon, Tass claimed, has conjured up a "false Soviet threat" to boost this switch.

Then in what was perhaps his most jingoistic speech to date President Reagan raised the Soviet threat to lend credence to his March 23 announcement of the need for "defensive" anti-ballistic



Former NASA administrator Robert Jastrow charged in October that "by undertaking a massive military space program designed to gain control of space, Moscow is attempting to shift the balance of power substantially in its favor." He worried that a "new surprise" like Sputnik could have "deadly consequences."

From Moscow came an echo. "Having failed to achieve a military superiority on Earth," announced the Soviet

missiles (ABMs), some of them to be stationed in outer space. It was a masterful performance, offering the possibility of fat new contracts for U.S. defense corporations, safety from the Soviets and an end to the atomic madness out of which sprang a Reagan nemesis—the freeze movement. The president's plan would supposedly move the U.S. from an offensive nuclear strategy based on "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) to a defensive system using an array of exotic weapons to intercept Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

This came as no surprise to readers of trade weeklys like *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, who for years have followed the Pentagon-funded corporate development of laser-weapon systems.

### "Assured survival."

Behind the president's announcement—besides the corporations with their interlocking ties in the highest reaches of the Defense Department—are some ultra-right members of Congress and political advisers who, since 1979, have urged an expanded U.S. presence in outer space. They argue publicly that the science-fiction weapons they propose are purely defensive—a shield against a catastrophic attack by an enemy who will soon deploy similar weapons. Only by building such weapons do they believe it possible to move completely to a strategy replacing MAD with "Assured Survival."

But other comments can be gleaned from their journal articles and books. The hawkish, 141-person Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), a source of much scholarly ranting about the Soviet menace, now counts many of its members in high posts of the Reagan admin-

istration. It was the CPD's analysis of CIA information that led to the idea of the "window of vulnerability," a time in the mid-'80s when the Soviets would have the capacity to achieve a first-strike against the U.S.

Animated by fierce loathing of the Kremlin and a desire to dismantle the "Soviet Empire," many of these men and women believe that space weapons, combined with earth-based ABMs, will give the U.S. enough of a strategic edge to successfully launch a first-strike against the Soviet Union. For example, presidential adviser Colin S. Gray declares in a recent book that a first-strike against the Soviets isn't only possible, but advisable.

Fear of Soviet superiority has often propelled the U.S. into deploying new weapons. Before he left Lockheed in 1970, Robert C. Aldridge helped engineer three generations of Polaris submarine missiles and the initial work on the giant Trident sub. He writes in the *Counterforce Syndrome* about the stories that circulated in the early '50s of a vastly superior Soviet bomber force. "Later that gap turned out to be a myth," he writes, but by then the Pentagon had built its B-52 fleet. In 1959, the missile gap spurred the U.S. to frantically build ICBMs. That gap also turned out to be a myth. Now there's the spacegun gap.

Says Aldridge, "I must reluctantly conclude from the evidence that the U.S. is ahead now and is rapidly approaching a first-strike capability.... The Soviet Union, meanwhile, seems to be struggling for second best. There is no available evidence that the USSR has the combined missile lethality, anti-submarine warfare potential, ballistic missile defense or space warfare technology to attain a disabling first strike before the end of this century, if then."

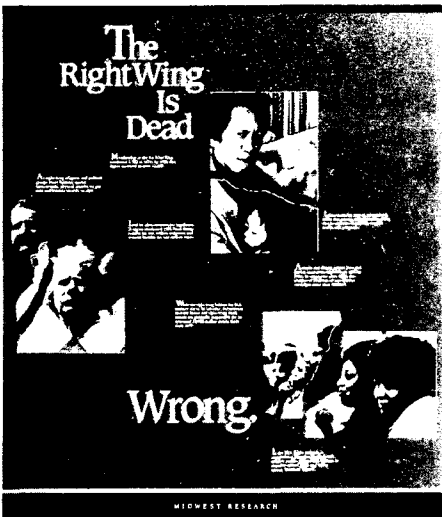
### Shift in strategy.

Origins of war strategy are shrouded in pre-history, reaching back into the millennia when one clan first raised stone and bone against another. But until the rocket and atomic bomb were linked in a single weapon in the '50s, strategy always included offensive and defensive facets. Enter, in 1961, Defense Secretary Robert MacNamara. It was his view, which soon became official policy, that the threat of nuclear holocaust could be reduced by adopting a strategy based on MAD. That is, if the Soviets were to get itchy trigger-fingers, they'd think twice because they would know the U.S. nuclear arsenal would inflict unacceptable damage on the Soviet Union. Likewise, the U.S. would be deterred, resulting in a tense but stable standoff.

Over the years MAD was revised but never abandoned. The Assured Survivalists now argue that the MAD strategy keeps the U.S. hostage—unprotected from Soviet missiles and subject to Soviet blackmail. As missiles become more accurate and carry more warheads, they say, the Soviets will reach a point at which they can obliterate land-based missiles and leave the U.S. defenseless, while incurring minimal damage at home.

Left out of this scenario, however, are the thousands of untouchable submarine-based missiles that Soviet leaders know could destroy tens of millions of Soviets and wipe out the country's in-

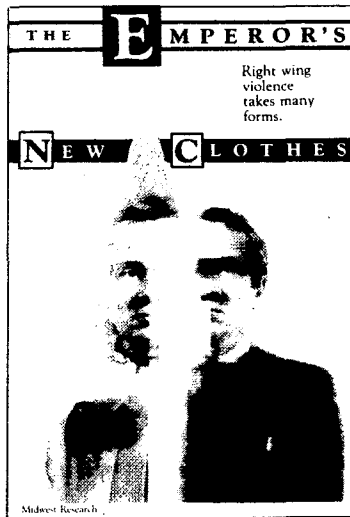
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dustry. Nevertheless, the Assured Survivalists assert that the U.S. is vulnerable and something must be done.

Since Reagan's speech, the pack journalists have focused on deathbeam exotica like adolescents around a new videogame. But if Congress goes along with the president, it is more likely that comparatively conventional weapons will be deployed in space first.

Gerard O'Neill penned an article in 1974 that *Rolling Stone* would later claim established him as the "undisputed hero of the grassroots space-industrialization movement." He proposed 10,000-person cities in outer space—cities filled with culture, nightlife and a striving to burst beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. He called it High Frontier.

The same year, Gen. Jacob E. Smart wrote that "we have no choice but to prepare to defend ourselves against at-

holocaust. But, like Graham, the president hasn't discontinued his push to build the B-1 bomber, the MX and sub-based missiles, even though they would all be made obsolete by a workable defensive strategy.

That's the trouble—the strategy isn't workable.

Richard Garwin of the Council of the Institute for Strategic Studies believes that the push to launch space weapons comes from a desire to return to the days when the U.S. was practically immune to an attack on its homeland. Space weapons are proposed, he says, "so people will not have fear of being destroyed. But if they're not going to fear when they should properly have fear, that is not democracy."

And John Steinbruner, director of for-

this session with more than 80 co-sponsors.

Jim Heaphy, a Californian who heads the three-year-old Progressive Space Forum—a group that is pro-space but anti-war—follows space weapons development in a newsletter called *Space for All People*.

"A lot of people who are pushing these weapons," says Heaphy, "are absolutely convinced that the Soviet system is completely, morally outside the normal nation-state set up and that the Soviets are absolutely bent on world conquest and will use any tactics, do everything to gain world domination. And, on the other hand, that the U.S. is the shining beacon of everything that's right and noble."

Although he sees the Soviet Union as flawed and a poor model for other societies, he opts for negotiating, however tricky that may be. "It's possible to lower the level of the arms race," Heaphy says. "That's better than sticking weapons in space."

### Peace talk propaganda.

Just as it was the Soviets who first launched a satellite in 1957, it was the Soviets in 1958 who first proposed "the banning of the use of cosmic space for military purposes." And it was the Soviets who 2½ years ago proposed a new ban on space weapons.

But skeptics call Soviet peace talk propaganda, pointing to the Soviets' anti-satellite weapons and other space efforts as evidence of the Kremlin's real intent. The Soviet military establishment isn't

eign policy studies at the Brookings Institution, thinks those who talk about space weapons while openly preparing for a long nuclear war with the Soviet Union "apparently discount the Soviet reaction, but the rest of us certainly should not."

tack...against aggression in space and from space. We cannot surrender the 'high ground' without contest."

While O'Neill wanted to leave behind as many of Earth's problems as possible, Smart felt certain the chief problem—war—would continue in the new frontier just as it had in all the old ones.

Now, from a tiny seven-person office in Washington, D.C., retired Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, a Reagan adviser in 1980, promotes a new version of High Frontier—an orbiting ring of satellites armed to shoot down Soviet ICBMs. Instead of lasers or particle beams, the High Frontier system would spend \$50 billion for 400 satellites armed with non-nuclear ABMs, a ground-based ABM system, a high-performance one-person "space cruiser," a low-orbit space station and a solar-generating system providing power to space stations and factories.

Graham believes his system could be fully operational by the end of the decade, well before any laser weapon could be deployed.

In High Frontier promotional material, the general writes, "Adoption of the High Frontier concept could even convert or confuse some of the traditional opponents of defense efforts and technological innovation. It is harder to oppose non-nuclear defense systems than nuclear offensive systems. It is almost impossible to argue effectively for a perpetual balance of terror strategy if it can be negated by new policies. It is hard to make environmentalist cases against space systems."

With the European and American antinuclear movements nipping at him, Reagan took a lesson from Graham and played up the propaganda value of a weapon system that would supposedly end the era of ICBMs and introduce a new era free from the threat of nuclear

The consequences, in his opinion, would be a space arms race that would "destabilize" the balance of power. If one side obtained the ability to shoot down the other's ICBMs, this race might speed to an all-out nuclear war at the finish line.

In September, Harold Hollenbeck, then a Republican Representative from New Jersey, co-sponsored a resolution to outlaw space weapons. "The greed machine of contractors, revolving door jobs, the endless excuses to build more military hardware is now being applied" in outer space, he said. "I, for one, do not want a gold-plated space program that is part of some Star Wars Pentagon." The resolution failed, but it was reintroduced

alone in holding a firm grip on space programs. According to the U.S. Congressional Research Service, by 1981 the Soviets had sent 1,250 payloads aloft, 60 percent military. The U.S. had launched 747 payloads, 56 percent military.

Since NASA's founding in 1958, there has been at best an obscure distinction between military and civilian space technology. The rocket, after all, provides thrust both for missiles armed with warheads and those carrying scientific equipment to explore the universe.

NASA contractors that have provided the billions of dollars worth of hardware for civilian space flight are indeed the same ones the Defense Department has engaged for its military needs. Over the past two decades, eight of them—Lockheed, Rockwell, General Dynamics, Boeing, McDonnell Douglas, Northrup and United Technologies—received 25 percent of all NASA contracts and 37 percent of the Pentagon's.

Testifying before the Senate in 1969, Thomas O. Paine, then administrator of NASA and now chief executive officer of Northrup, said, "When you look at the things that bring America its industrial capability in the world today...it is the computers, it is the aerospace industry, it is the electronics, the communications, it is the very fields which NASA has done most to stimulate that are the things which really comprise America's industrial leadership today."

With NASA dollars, these same industries have built the technological foundation upon which the U.S. defense estab-

lishment rests. Yet over the decades, the heady thrust of NASA's civilian space program served to cloak the strong military involvement in space.

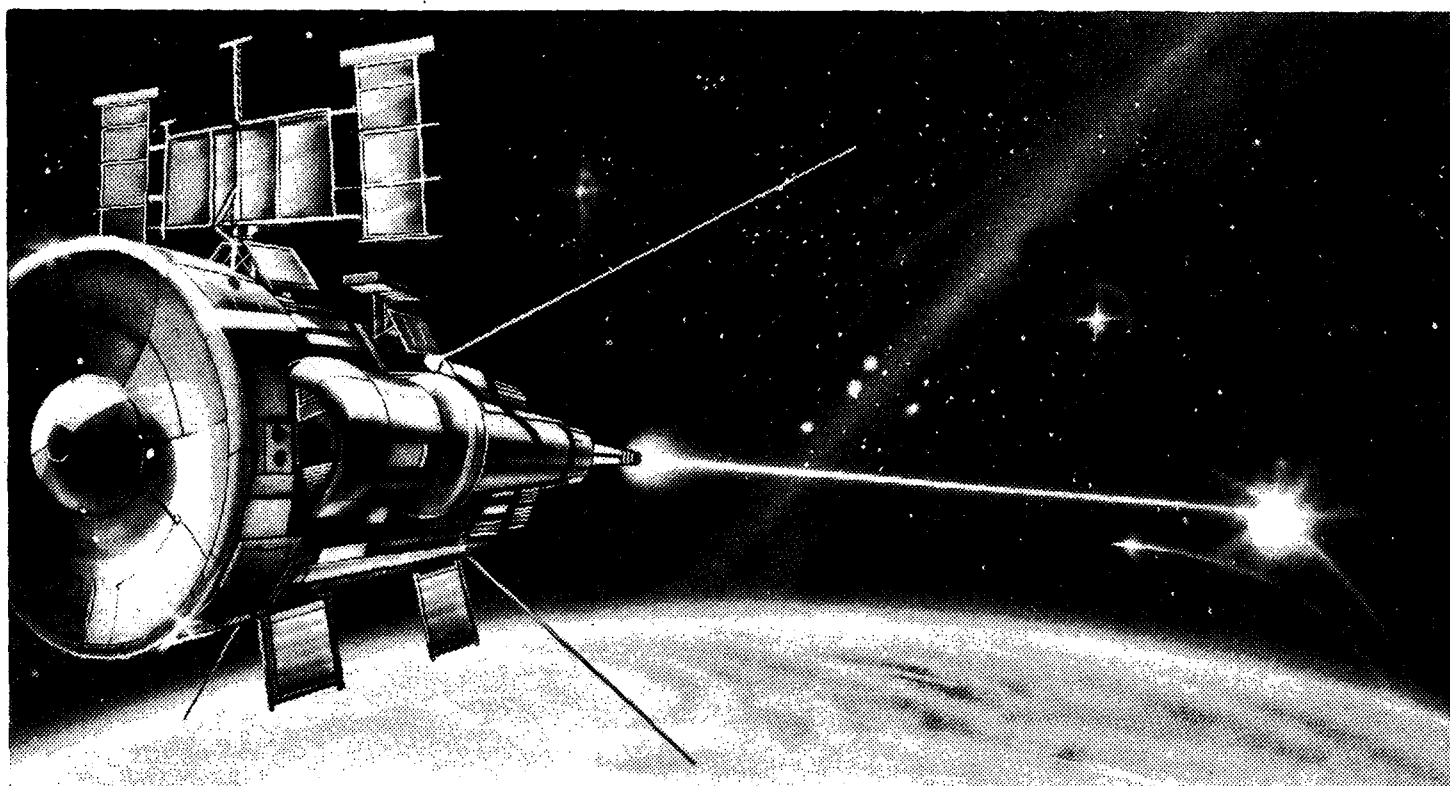
In the past few years, however, the militarization of NASA has become blatant. The space shuttle—built according to Air Force specifications and that will fly more than half its missions through 1994 for the military—absorbs a whopping 65 percent of the civilian agency's budget. And NASA now receives fewer dollars than the Pentagon for space endeavors.

NASA's administrator is James Beggs, formerly of Westinghouse Defense and General Dynamics; Beggs' deputy is former secretary of the Air Force Hans Mark; the head of the space shuttle is retired four-star Gen. James Abrahamson.

"I think we're at the point now where we have NASA being run as an adjunct to the Defense Department and to the aerospace industry," says Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.), who has called for hearings to challenge the president's weaponization of space.

Colorado Rep. Ken Kramer, a conser-

## U.S. supporters of space-based arms believe retreat means surrender.



Photographer unknown

vative Republican who was instrumental in creating the Air Force's new Space Command at Colorado Springs, says, "The U.S. should protect and defend its national interests and sovereignty on the 'high seas of space.'"

But, by treaty, there is no sovereignty for anyone in space, just as, by treaty, there are supposed to be no ABMs in space. Nevertheless, many of those who believe in establishing orbiting colonies like the idea of building spaceguns because they see heavy military involvement as the gateway to an expanded interest in civilian uses of outer space.

Addressing them in the April 1982 issue of *Space for the People*, Jon Alexander posed this question: "Are we willing to buy our ticket to space from the merchants of war? ...In other words, are we willing to sell our soul in a quest for knowledge and power? That is the Faustian dilemma all space supporters must face."

Daniel Deudney of the WorldWatch Institute wrote in a recent monograph, "...[R]eversing the spread of weapons into space, making space a stronger pillar of international peacekeeping, designing new institutions of global scientific cooperation and ensuring a permanently habitable Earth would be to conquer humanity's real frontiers."

President Reagan appears headed in a contrary direction.

Timothy Lange is the *In These Times* Denver correspondent. S.K. Levin is the science reporter for the *Colorado Daily*.



The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction



# LETTERS

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

## HAROLD WASHINGTON LACKS MORAL FIBER

ALTHOUGH IN THESE TIMES APPEARS to be looking for solid liberal Democrats the left can believe in, David Moberg's report on the Chicago mayoral race (ITT, March 30) did not convince me that Harold Washington is our man. Burying Washington's indecent moral conduct under the heading of "making race the issue" is a deliberate distraction from the fact that the man consciously did wrong as a legislator and as a lawyer, abusing positions of public trust and responsibility.

Moberg need not apologize with the judge who "knew of other prominent legislators who had not filed their tax forms but were not prosecuted." The point is that Washington succumbed to the corrupting influence of power as a petty legislator and all the "legislative awards and major newspaper endorsements" in the world won't give him the moral fiber to withstand temptation as one of the world's most powerful mayors.

Washington's politics appear correct. But the solution to Reaganism is not purely a political antedote—the left's answer must be embodied by the spokesman who advocates a public role in support of human dignity and social justice. As much as a black Democrat like Washington is needed in Chicago's top spot, it appears that David Moberg's attraction to Harold Washington is only skin deep.

—Gary Friedman  
Bar Harbor, Maine

## GUTTER JOURNALISM

I COULD SCARCELY BELIEVE MY EYES when I read David Moberg's coverage (ITT, March 30) of the Chicago mayoral race, entitled "Washington faces fight in campaign based on race."

Moberg claims Epton initially declared that he would make neither Washington's "past personal problems" nor race a campaign issue, and

that Epton then proceeded to do this. A paragraph (indeed an entire article) follows in which one searches in vain for how Epton has made Washington's skin an issue. As to Epton's alleged declaration that he would not bring up Washington's "past personal problems," perhaps he could document (in a less twisted manner than his attempt to nail Epton as waging a racist campaign) this charge.

No doubt the Mobergs of this world are deeply concerned with achieving racial harmony, as well as electing decent politicians, but their method in this particular case makes a large number of people (white and black and every single one of them free of prejudice) squirm uncomfortably. I never imagined that *In These Times* would stoop to the level of printing this gutter journalism, however much the paper supports Washington.

I doubt that there are many intelligent people in Chicago who don't realize that this current "campaign based upon race" has been created by Washington and his supporters. Epton has attacked Washington's personal past and struck a telling blow. Instead of facing these charges like a man, Washington and his supporters have resorted to the tried and true methods of guilt by association and branding an opponent as racist simply because Washington can't take the heat. However much you want Washington to win, it puts a new perspective on his character.

If Washington loses this election—or if he wins but creates a widespread distaste among previously potential supporters—I think he and his freewheeling supporters have only themselves to blame. It's a sad fact that such a normally responsible paper like *In These Times* has to share the blame.

—Amos Roe  
Malta, Ill.

David Moberg replies: Was Washington's conduct "indecent and immoral" and an "abuse of public trust"? Or was it sloppiness in maintaining his personal

affairs while preoccupied with public duties? Neither is admirable in a leader, but the latter is forgivable.

Washington never tried to evade taxes. Taxes were deducted for the four years when he did not file. (There is no statute of limitations on recovery of taxes if he had not filed for 19, as Epton alleges.) The remaining amount owed was tiny (\$508.05). The IRS recommends prosecution only if amounts average more than \$2,500 a year. There is also reason to suspect that Washington was criminally prosecuted for political reasons, since he was a strong civil rights advocate and had led a walkout against Vice-President Spiro Agnew in the state legislature in the year prior to his indictment by the Republican attorney general. Most attorneys think he would have won if he had fought rather than pleaded no contest to close the case quickly.

The other charges against him are similarly muddled. In five cases, all involving small sums, such as \$15 to \$60, he was accused of not performing services. Washington said that they were only partial downpayments and claimed that his preoccupation with both legislative work and pro bono legal work led him to let some matters slide.

In my judgment, these are not major crimes or sins, especially when weighed against a public record that shows no attempt at abuse of power or using that office for public gain and highly lauded work. Rather they show personal flaws: disorganization, dilatoriness, a little bullheadedness—not commendable but hardly criminal.

From the beginning, Washington has stressed unifying the city and a multi-ethnic coalition. He has not campaigned as much or as well as he should have in white communities, but Epton has not addressed blacks. Epton's campaign offices distribute racist literature (white women will be raped if Washington wins, property values will decline if "Mr. Baboon" gets in power), his supporters are frequently openly racist, and Epton unleashes this behavior with his codes, like the "before it's too late" slogan first used by Sam Yorty against Tom Bradley in Los Angeles. At a typical recent campaign rally, Epton took digs at Washington—he "isn't quite too bright," "assuming he can read," "we don't need him in our neighborhood" that can only be seen in context as legitimizing the cruder expressions of his supporters, like his earlier arguments that whites needn't apologize for voting for whites. Washington's appeals to blacks are not racist but legitimate arguments of self-interest to support a candidate who takes them seriously.

Washington's no saint and has not run the best campaign, but Epton's campaign has been one of the most scurrilous in years.

## AFFIRMATION

BILL BLUM'S FINELY WRITTEN REVIEW of Joseph Conlin's *The Troubles: A Jaundiced Glance Back at the Movement of the '60s* (ITT, March 23) was right on target. Clearly, this piece of pseudo-history fits neatly in the growing collection of reinterpretations of that decade of social and political turmoil—and change. Government fictionalization of American involvement and defeat in Vietnam sits side by side with "scholarly" attempts to minimize the gains of that era. These works appear now for good reason. These forces working to rid the U.S. of "Vietnam syndrome" seek to legitimize current military adventures in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The same forces seek to rollback the social, political and economic reforms of the recent past by demonstrating the origin of those reforms in "adolescent" or "utopian" programs that were extorted from a weak-kneed government by "terrorists."

But a whole page of your paper spent on trashing of a hardcover book, from a small commercial publisher, by an author whose motivation and credentials are equally suspect? *Radical America's* recent 15th anniversary special issue—with selections of writings from many activists, artists and thinkers of the '60s and '70s—certainly deserves as much attention. We cannot stem the tide of reaction by merely attacking "their" revision of history. We must affirm our own. Critically, and supportively.

—John Demeter  
Radical America  
Somerville, Mass.

## DEFINITION

I HAVE BEEN READING WITH INTEREST the running verbal battle in the "Letters" page concerning democracy Soviet versus democracy American style. I conclude that "real existing socialism" as practiced in the Soviet Union has produced a viable society that provides the average citizen with a reasonable degree of freedom, consumer goods and an economic "safety net" unequaled by our society. America is more democratic than the Soviet Union, but to really enjoy this democracy a citizen has to have an income level well above the government poverty level.

In various articles in *In These Times* the writers sign as "was a Communist for 20 years," "is now a socialist," "feminist activist" or whatever. Am I correct in assuming that by being an ex-Communist, he or she is no longer a member of the regular, old CPUSA, as represented by Gus Hall and company? I don't suppose it means that that person has completely renounced the ideas expressed by Marx and Engels in their classic works.

Marx and Engels as well as Jesus Christ were idealists. In this real world where we still threaten to kill ourselves with nuclear clubs like cave men, it is no wonder that there are shortcomings in our existing societies.

So what is a communist anyway? Probably as much a state of mind as anything else unless we arbitrarily define the term. My American Heritage dictionary states: "Communist: a. The theory of revolutionary struggle toward this system of absence of social classes and by common ownership of production means. b. Socialism as exemplified in countries ruled by Communist parties."

Part b. of the definition says that socialism is what you have in a country ruled by the Communist Party and since the Soviet Union is ruled by the Communist Party we might as well call it socialism until we develop the "better idea."

—James T. Pinkerton  
Plymouth, Mich.

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## DIALOG

## Avoid blanket condemnation

The following two communications were written in response to a Dialog piece by In These Times Associate Editor John Judis that was itself a response to our editorial, "Socialism means trusting the people," (ITT, Dec. 22). Judis argued

against my assertion that the common ancestry of democratic socialists and the Communists of the Soviet Union required us to acknowledge the connection while explaining why we can reasonably expect to do better. —James Weinstein

## Cuba's made great gains

By Max Gordon

**R**ECENT IN THESE TIMES debate concerning democratic socialist attitudes toward the self-defined socialist states has focused on whether they should be viewed as socialist. Other facets of the problem, I believe, also merit attention.

Most American democratic socialists tend to take a one-dimensional view of these countries. Their oppressive nature, which varies significantly from country to country, leads to a blanket condemnation, consigning all equally to outer darkness and barring further observation into what makes them tick.

In the light of the record, such a reaction is perhaps understandable among devotees of Western democratic culture. It is reinforced by the instrumental consideration that—as a recent *In These Times* editorial put it—the denial of civil liberties in these societies "is a serious obstacle in the path of a popular socialist politics" in the U.S.

Yet these Communist-led societies are varied and complex, in the main products of shattering revolutionary upheavals embracing more than a third of the world's population. Most have well-developed health and education systems, expanding productive capacities with varied and in some cases evolving worker management practices, and varying but customarily high degrees of egalitarianism. Production and distribution problems they wrestle with are generally shaped by their non-capitalist character, but they seek to solve them in various ways.

A handful of American academic specialists do study the workings of these societies more or less objectively. But such study is customarily off-limits for democratic socialists, though interest in the dynamics of non-capitalist societies would appear to be warranted despite the political failings.

Corporate ideologues and propagandists are, of course, always alert to defame these societies, to suppress or deny their achievements and to depict them as an undifferentiated, wicked mass. Ammunition is not lacking. But their defamation extends well beyond the actualities. Where Communists or Communist-led states are involved, journalists and historians are not bound by the usual rules of evidence; however unconfirmed, any critical statement is likely to go effectively unchallenged. Our culture is so saturated with an unremittingly evil image of these societies that even the best of us do not escape its effects.

As illustration, John Judis argues (ITT, Jan. 19) that these self-defined socialist states use "socialism" as an ideology that allows them to "disguise their antagonistic relationship to the citizens they rule," listing Cuba among others. He concedes Cuba greater "freedom and prosperity" than Haiti and the better job done by Castro than by Batista in providing "minimal but real" levels of education, health care, housing and diet.

The implication is that Cuba's slight material achievements are nothing remarkable in the Third World generally.

## The actual record.

Does this fairly characterize Castro Cuba's record? An annual handbook of the prestigious Overseas Development Council, chaired by ex-World Bank President Robert McNamara, carries extensive data on life span, infant mortality and literacy rate of all countries, developing and developed. A Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI), combining the three modalities, is used as a measure of welfare progress of total populations. Last year's handbook reported that Cuba's PQLI of 93 topped all 143 developing countries listed (including every other Latin American country), and precisely equalled the average PQLI of the 29 developed countries (of both blocs). It trailed slightly behind the U.S.'s 96, which tied for sixth. A complex measure based on PQLI improvement from 1960 to 1980 placed Cuba second only to Japan among the 67 nations for which this measure was available.

As commentary on Judis' ironic comparison of Cuba with Haiti, let's note that oil-rich democratic Venezuela's PQLI was 81. In 1977 *New York Times* reports from Havana and Caracas, 10 days apart, graphically described the difference between the two countries suggested by the respective PQLIs. From Havana Paul Hoffman wrote (April 20) that the city was ringed with dairy farms under intensive development to guarantee milk for school children, yogurt and ice cream. The citizens appeared "well provided with essentials," no beggars or urchins were on the streets and all appeared "neatly if simply dressed." Education, medical and dental care were free, transportation cheap "and factories and schools provide good meals." Ten percent of one wage went for rent and 5 percent for furniture "which generally includes a refrigerator and a television set."

From Caracas Juan de Onis wrote (April 30) that shantytowns ringing the city

housed a third of its 1.4 million inhabitants. The crime and juvenile delinquency plaguing the city were attributed by Venezuela's president to the "monstrous inequality" between rich and poor. Large numbers of children were abandoned by mothers without child support. Venezuela's *per capita* GNP in 1980 was \$3,630 and Cuba's \$1,410. Can this stark contrast between Venezuela's far greater wealth and Cuba's greater popular well-being be attributed to anything but the difference in social systems?

A 1982 U.S. Department of Commerce reported noted, startlingly, that Cuba's "social achievements, especially in education and health...are highly respected in the Third World." It reported a "highly equitable" income distribution virtually wiping out malnutrition, a health care system rivaling "numerous developed countries," near total elimination of illiteracy and a "highly developed multilateral educational system and a 'well-disciplined and motivated population...' (emphasis added).

The report is primarily devoted, however, to assailing Cuba's "highly inefficient political and economic management system" modeled after the Soviet. This too is worth study by democratic socialists, particularly in light of the source, as is the impact of Soviet aid.

A tribute to Cuba appeared recently in another unusual publication, the Socialist International bulletin *Socialist Affairs*. A Social Democratic Swiss parliamentarian declared that the Cuban revolutionaries "have profoundly transformed their country" from that of a wretched, exploited people to "a proud, active people who are decently fed, housed and educated." Cuba, he exclaimed, has become "an island of light in Latin America." Along similar lines, veteran *New York Times* correspondent Alan Riding wrote (Jan. 4, 1981) that the real problem Cuba presented to the U.S. was the popularity of its example in wiping out hunger, illiteracy and disease. A few months later (April 26, 1981) *Times* reporter Kenneth Briggs described Cuba as a Third World "showcase" for services to its 10,000,000 people, who appeared well-fed, housed and employed, solidly educated, with huge strides made in eradicating infectious diseases, infant mortality and death from cancer and heart disease.

Earlier Alan Riding observed (Jan. 2,

way, invented the "dictatorship of the proletariat" anyway?

According to Judis, not one Third World or "socialist-in-name" country deserves to be called even "proto-socialist" because, according to him, socialism can occur only in advanced capitalist countries where bourgeois democracy is in full swing.

Let's be honest. Marx foresaw socialist revolutions in advanced capitalist societies, but his vision of "advanced" covered the advanced nature of the class oppression under capitalist relations of productions as well as advanced in the field of highly developed productive forces. Many of Marx's "advanced" capitalist countries at the time of his writings were not nearly as industrialized as the socialist countries are today—including Eastern Europe, Nicaragua, China and Cuba. Marx and Judis have both seriously underestimated the revolutionary role being played by the contradictions arising from imperialist relations of productions.

The socialist countries have already "expanded the production of necessary goods" and "reduced the amount of necessary labor time"—Judis' two requirements for socialism. He just isn't happy that the standard of living in

1977) that: "Everywhere in Latin America, except Cuba, millions of rural inhabitants are still excluded from the economic and political lives of their countries." The difference, he noted, was that Cuba alone had carried through the agrarian revolution.

The point was underscored by the late Herbert Matthews, long-time chief *New York Times* European correspondent and editorial board member, who probably knew Castro Cuba more intimately than any other U.S. journalist. In a 1975 study, *Revolution in Cuba*, he wrote: "Everyone participates in the Cuban Revolution. Fidel gets a consensus that is not democracy western style, but it is surely some kind of democracy." It "has nothing to do with civil liberties, but we are talking about a consensus of the people in the process of government."

In the light of such testimony, as of the Commerce Department report's comment about a "motivated people," Judis' contention that Cuban socialism disguises the regime's antagonistic relationship to its people suggests how profoundly we are influenced by prevailing propaganda and how little we know about the realities of specific self-defined socialist states. This is not to say that abuse of power is absent in Cuba. Even Castro once remarked that a leader of a successful social revolution receives such popular adulation that his power is beyond effective challenge. Hence he must be especially cautious in its use.

Though Castro has probably been far more critical of his own power abuses in

## Judis' contention that the Cuban regime has an antagonistic relationship to its people shows we know little.

certain areas than any other ruler, such abuses still occur in Cuba and the defenses against them, though they exist, appear inadequate. Some of this, though not all, is plainly attributable to safeguards compelled by the relentless efforts organized by the CIA to sabotage, overthrow and assassinate. Though we should be critical of the abuses, they should not blind us to Cuba's achievements with respect to its people's welfare and to the support behind Castro in constructing a collective society.

Max Gordon is a former editor of the *Daily Worker*.

## What Marx really foresaw

By Branch Walker

**J**OHAN JUDIS' LETTER (ITT, JAN. 19) was the worst piece of writing I have seen in a socialist publication in 15 years. His attack on the historical struggles of millions of socialist revolutionaries who have given of themselves so valiantly in the war of the proletariat against the bondage of big capital made me sick. It is Judis' idealism and not the continuing class struggle in socialist societies that is making Marx turn over in his grave. As I remember from Marx and books about socialism, class struggle does not end with the seizure of state power. Has Judis ever read Marx's bitter analysis of the petty bourgeois maneuverings during the French Revolution of 1848 or has he ever studied the betrayal of the middle classes in Chile prior to Allende's overthrow? Who other than Marx, by the

Third World countries has not reached the height of England, the Netherlands and, presumably, the U.S. Marx fully understood that under capitalism and its world marketing system, that rapidly growing capitalist economies necessarily are based upon the exploitation and impoverishment of other countries. Do you really expect that nations such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Mozambique or China can ever match the wealth of the colonial and imperialist powers who have grown by plundering other nation's economies, people and natural resources?

The point being made by Judis on democracy also misses the mark. He seems enamored with western Euro-American bourgeois democracy. Not for a moment do I believe that proletarian democracy under socialism will resemble our system of political patronage, of faceless, issueless candidates mouthing platitudes of general good will while they represent special interest groups in the backrooms of government.

Workers want participatory democracy, not the right to cast ballots for bourgeois candidates. I have read of democracy in the great rise of socialism in Russia where workers, peasants, intellectuals and soldiers led themselves to

Continued on the following page



Continued from the previous page

victory. I have read of democracy in the PLA in China that re-organized the base areas, redistributing the land and organizing peasant collectives and peasant democratic armies. I have watched the democratic "Solidarity" movement in Poland rise up and demand the union of workers, peasants and intellectuals in order to bring about reform (not capitalist restoration) in their government. But rarely in the last 50 years has proletarian democracy appeared in the U.S., and I suspect that if a Solidarity movement does lift its head in the U.S., with workers, students, farmers and field workers demanding that its bourgeois government end its imperialist blood-sucking of Third World countries, that the slaughter in the streets will make Poland's experience look like a picnic.

Last of all, Judis' assertion that only western Euro-Americans can develop socialism makes a mockery of the millions worldwide who have given and continue to dedicate their lives to work, to study and to participate in the development of socialism. The daily dedication of the masses of common working folk brings the seeds of socialism to fruition.

Socialist revolution is being made in every country of the world, sometimes by peaceful means and sometimes by violent ones, sometimes with democratic means and sometimes with harsh military discipline. There are people who wait for worldwide revolution to act; there are people who wait for superpower industrialization to act; there are people who wait for bourgeois democracy to act. But I say that the practice of socialism comes from a state of heart, a state

of mind and a system of collective practice as well as from economic theories and mechanical class and productive relationships.

For a growing number of us, our daily exploitation at the hands of the capitalist class has led us to support other people of the world who suffer under the same yoke as we. And by studying history and philosophy, by learning of the conditions in other countries and talking with our fellow workers we have learned that the search for and the creation of the classless society has already begun, and we have already chosen to act. Unlike Judis' silently racist platitudes, we accept the fact that others in the world have already carried the banner of socialism well down the road toward that goal. We are happy to follow in those footsteps.

vakia in 1968.

But two points remain: short of the transformation of that structure, these societies are merely socialist-in-name. The use of the term "socialist" does disguise their true nature in the same way that the use of the term "populist" by a Republican conservative like Jack Kemp disguises the true nature of his politics. It is no accident that in Yugoslavia—the socialist-in-name country closest to genuine socialism—the leading Marxist theoretician, Branko Horvat, denies the term socialist to his own country and to the other socialist-in-name countries calling them instead "etatist."

***Every socialist country has its own character, but all are under the total control of a self-selected Party leadership or bureaucracy.***

Second, the transformation of the structure of rule is a necessary but not sufficient condition. In addition, the organization of production and the development of technology must have advanced to the point where all the citizens can enjoy the time necessary to educate themselves for self-government. For instance, the Asian and African socialist-in-name countries are far from this. In these countries, Michels' iron law of oligarchy will simply reassert itself regardless of the formal structure of rule. If such an assertion in Walker's and Gordon's eyes, condemns me to a Euro-Japanese-American centrism, so be it.

## Talking past one another

By John B. Judis

**I**TREAD LIGHTLY IN ANSWERING Branch Walker's letter for fear of sinking into a bog of revolutionary rhetoric. When Marx used the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," he was describing the transitional political system that would replace the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" characteristic of capitalist society. In neither society were there "dictators" as that term is presently understood. Marx expected that most capitalist and all socialist societies would be parliamentary democracies. In the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, the rule of law would be directed against members of the bourgeoisie attempting to re-establish capitalism, just as in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie the rule of the law is directed against proletarian

confiscations of private property. In this sense, "class struggle" would continue after capitalism. But the suppression of labor unions (e.g. Solidarity) by a military government is not what Marx envisaged as class struggle under socialism. It has nothing whatsoever in common with the much misunderstood Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. I'll let *In These Times* readers unravel the rest of Walker's response themselves.

Max Gordon seems to be making a telling point against my use of the term "socialism" but is really talking past the argument I made. I do not deny Cuba's achievements and will grant Gordon that my comparison of Cuba and Haiti belittled those achievements. But I made the comparison between Cuba and Haiti in the course of insisting that socialist-in-name countries must be evaluated individually; that while Cuba's achievements are considerable, those of other countries (Cambodia, to take the easiest example) are not. In short, I made the comparison to support precisely the point Gordon seems to want to make.

But Gordon wants to use Cuba's achievements to make a further point:

that the relationship between Cuba's Communist rulers and the Cuban people is not "antagonistic" in contrast, say, to the relation between Poland's military authorities and the Polish people. Gordon misunderstands my use of the term "antagonistic."

While each socialist-in-name country is different, most of them share certain structural features: the major means of production are not owned and controlled by the citizenry, but by a state party or bureaucracy; the state is not a "dictatorship of the proletariat," but is under the total control of a self-selected party or bureaucracy. In the Marxist sense, this creates an "antagonistic" relationship between the party or bureaucracy and the people. In the ordinary sense of the word, some Communist governments enjoy a less antagonistic (i.e. hostile) relationship to the citizenry than others, just as some corporate managements enjoy a less antagonistic relationship to their employees than others. Moreover, some Communist governments provide more benefits and abuse their powers less than others; and some may even take steps to alter their own structural relationship to the populace. This happened in Czechoslo-

# Dark Circle

"An urgent horror story" — New York Times

**Y**ou are invited to a special showing of *Dark Circle*, a film portrait of the nuclear age, at 2 pm on Saturday, April 16 at the Varsity Theater in Evanston. The showing is a benefit for *In These Times* newspaper and the filmmakers, Judy Irving and Chris Beaver. There will be a discussion after the showing with director Judy Irving and a special guest.

Tickets are \$6, available in advance at the theater, located at 1710 Sherman in Evanston, the Guild Bookstore, 2456 N. Lincoln, Chicago, or at *In These Times*, 1300 West Belmont, Chicago. Tickets will also be available at the box office on the day of the showing.

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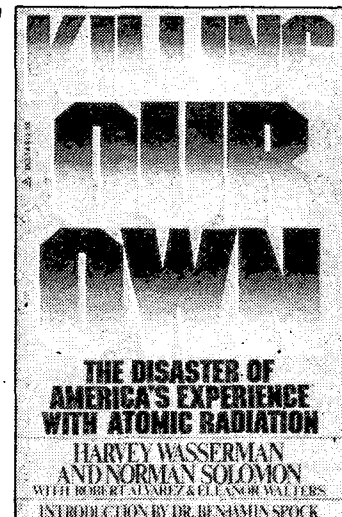
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## INPRINT

## EL SALVADOR

## Didion offers despair, but little insight



Joan Didion reveals that war is hell.

Salvador  
By Joan Didion  
Simon and Schuster  
108 pp., \$12.95

By Christopher Hitchens

This book, in its style and its design, might be called Joan Didion's *Black Album*. It is necessary (as well as easy) to read it twice. The first reading reveals the author as a descriptive and evocative writer of some power and scope:

"The heat up here was drier than that in the capital, harsher, dustier, and by now we were resigned to it, resigned to the jolting of the taxi, resigned to the frequent occasions on which we were required to stop, get out, present our identification (carefully, reaching slowly into an outer pocket, every move calculated not to startle the soldiers, many of whom seemed barely pubescent, with the M-16s) and wait while the taxi was searched. Some of the younger soldiers wore crucifixes wrapped with bright yarn, the pink and green of the yarn stained now with dust and sweat. The taxi driver was perhaps 20 years older than most of these soldiers, a stocky, well-settled citizen wearing expensive sunglasses, but at each roadblock, in a motion so abbreviated as to be almost imperceptible, he would touch each of the two rosaries that hung from the rear-view mirror and cross himself."

And as an ironist: "On this evening, that began with the grandson of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez and progressed to 'Seniorita El Salvador 1982' and ended, at 12:22 a.m., with the earthquake, I began to see Gabriel Garcia Marquez in a new light, as a social realist."

And as a shrewd lady: "In this light the American effort had a distinctly circular aspect (the aid as the card with which we got the Salvadorans to do it our way, and appearing to do it our way was the card with which the Salvadorans got the aid)."

Passages and *aperçus* like that have led the reviewers of the liberal press to exhaust their superlatives on *Salvador*. But a second reading discloses a certain blemish in the writing and a distinct lack of fiber in the analysis. The book is so damned easy to

summarize: war is hell; the experience of terror is humiliating; the local fascists act like real ones; the complexity of the country fries the brains; the U.S. may be embarked on another of those shows (compounded of one-third idealism and two-thirds cowboy counter-revolution) in which it specializes.

That's it. That's the message of the book. It's much what the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* say, and have been saying for some time. It's not unlike the effect produced by Robert Stone's faintly haunting novel *A Flag for Sunrise*, which roughly speaking argues that in certain parts of the world—including Southeast Asia and the Central American isthmus—the gringo is just out of his depth. And Stone, to be sure, heaped his praises on Didion in *Vanity Fair*.

### History ignored.

I hope that I am not being sectarian or dogmatic in finding a reactionary undertone to this kind of existential, wised-up despair. Why, for instance, does Didion spend no more than a paragraph or two on the history of the country and its people? And those paragraphs are all about the crazy General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, a rococo butcher who ran the place in the '30s, reducing the population by anything from 7,000 to 30,000 during a few weeks in 1932, and ruling with a rambling evangelical style of demagoguery. Obviously, it is tempting for any writer to dwell on this fellow (who seems to be the model for Garcia Marquez's *Autumn of the Patriarch*), but if you leave it at that, the place seems to be a conundrum rather than a country or a society. And as often as not the answer to the conundrum is a shrug. The horrors of El Salvador are not, as Didion more than once suggests, the result of the peculiarities of its people.

At one point, she visits a shopping mall and is amazed at: "the *pate de foie gras* for sale in the supermarket, about the guard who did the weapons check on everyone who entered the supermarket, about the young matrons in tight Sergio Valente jeans, trailing maids and babies behind them and buying towels, big beach towels printed with maps of Manhattan that featured Bloomingdale's."

This is the style of the tourist-reporter. I have read it almost word for word about Beirut, for instance ("Despite violence, life and chic goes on..."). If you're in the right frame of mind and

*El Salvador only became a problem to the U.S. when the wretched of the earth began to fight.*



*The violent terror of El Salvador—such as this dump where butchered bodies often appear—overwhelmed Didion's skills as an ironist.*

onto a story, you can suck that kind of copy out of a mall that is downwind from Three Mile Island. Or, for that matter, at the way we all go—Sergio Valente jeans or not—shopping away and then pay our taxes to the MX at the checkout.

The problem is, as our author realizes a few paragraphs later on, that: "I was no longer much interested in this kind of irony, that this was a story that would not be illuminated by such details, that this was a story that would perhaps not be illuminated at all, that this was perhaps even less a 'story' than a true

*noche obscura.*"

What's a body to do?

The right will dislike this book, because it evades the (good) question—will El Salvador become Communist? Some of the "hard" left will deride it for wavering and agonizing. Both will be correct to the usual limited extent. What one yearns for is a bit of detachment, followed by a bit of reflection and succeeded by a bit of commitment. It's of doubtful value simply to try and register, at this stage, the pains of the dilemma. First, is there a way of ending the war without straight military victory on one side or the other? Second, would any revolution not be better than the current lethal and parasitic despotism? Third, won't the revolution triumph anyway and might it not be best to bequeath it a country with at least one brick left standing on another? Fourth, is all of this any business of the U.S., the country indelibly associated with the generations of oligarchy?

El Salvador, after all, only became a "problem" when the

*Continued on following page*

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## ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

## MUSIC

# Ronnie Gilbert weaves old issues and new



Gilbert with the Weavers

By Michael Kimmel

To their respective generations, Ronnie Gilbert and Holly Near have come to symbolize the interweaving of music and left politics. One of the original Weavers, Gilbert is a "foremother" of the folk movement of the late '50s and early '60s. Near, whose music was developed in the antiwar movements of the late '60s and early '70s, is now one of the most visible performers of women's music. This month, Gilbert and Near perform together on an 11-city tour.

Their collaboration grew out of their work together in preparation for the Weavers reunion concert at Carnegie Hall in 1980. The concert might have been anachronistic, a momentary sentimental glance back at the past. But, as the documentary film *Wasn't That a Time* attests, the Weavers reunion became a cele-

bration of political commitment and musical emotion.

Excluding the reunion concert, this tour marks Gilbert's return to the concert stage after a 20-year hiatus. In that time the musical landscape has changed dramatically, Gilbert told *In These Times*. "For one thing, the number of women singing and writing today is amazing," she said. "When we were being reviewed by the newspapers, they always referred to me as a 'chick,' a 'fem,' a 'lark,' a 'thrush.' There was something very demeaning about it. They also mentioned the clothes I wore. 'Sweaterish' Ronnie Gilbert, they called me. Eventually, I started wearing gowns because that called less attention to oneself than to dress simply."

After the Weavers broke up in 1963, Gilbert turned to "that big stretch of open stage which we had never used." Her acting career included work with Joseph Chaiken in the Open Theater as well as Harold Pinter, Peter Brook, and Elizabeth Swados.

## A switch to therapy.

In 1970 she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area after visiting California at the urging of her daughter. "I felt finished with show business, with performing," she said. "It was a crucial time for me. I had not yet become aware of the women's movement. Had I been aware, connected with conscious women at that point, things might have been different. But what I did was go into therapy."

She eventually decided to become a therapist herself and received an M.A. in clinical psychology from Lone Mountain College. Later she moved to Vancouver to work "as a therapist and not as an actor or a singer."

In 1974, Holly Near—who had listened to the Weavers as a child and started her musical career with a Weavers-like group called the Freedom Singers—dedicated a live album to Ronnie Gilbert, "a woman who knew how to sing and what to sing about."

"I didn't even know if she was still alive," Near remembered. "Some of my friends called up and asked, 'My God, did she die?' and I said, 'I don't know.'"

Gilbert's daughter heard the record and sent it to her mother.

"I hadn't heard of Holly then," Gilbert said. "Her record was a big shock to me. It was like reading a letter from a friend I never knew I had, about things I had long wanted to share with someone and didn't know how. It was like discovering my own voice after a long silence. It was Holly's record that first turned me on to what was happening with women."

## Old fans, new concerns.

In 1980, when the Weavers began discussing a reunion concert, Gilbert suggested updating their repertoire to include new songs. "I was eager to have the concert represent who the Weavers are now," she recalled. "I felt it was a great opportunity for us to make some statements as 'senior

citizens' to our old audiences about what's happening now."

Gilbert chose two of Near's songs—"Something About the Women," and "Hay Una Mujer"—and presented them to the other Weavers.

"At first, they were very reluctant," Gilbert said. "We had very little time to prepare for the concert. And these songs were out of the folk idiom, requiring lots of chord changes, and the Weavers had to learn them on instruments like the banjo. I said to Pete [Seeger], 'Take this tape home and listen to it. If you still feel they're unlearnable, okay, I'll pass on them.' And he came back the next day and said, 'I think you're right and they're going to be the high point of the concert.'"

Geoffrey Stokes, reviewing the film of the concert in the *Village Voice* wrote, "Ronnie Gilbert seems to have been revitalized by feminism. Of the new songs, Holly Near's...were by far the strongest."

The reaction from both critics and audiences encouraged Near and Gilbert to collaborate on this concert tour. (Their collaboration is reminiscent of the periodic concerts and records by Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie that bridge musical generations.) "To have Ronnie there politically," Near said, "demystifies those eras, what was going on before I was born. We tend to romanticize the people who were part of the left in the '30s, '40s and '50s."

For Gilbert, the collaboration represents bringing music and politics together again, which, she noted, has been most visible in the women's music in recent years.

"That's what this tour is all about," Near said, "reminding us that we are part of a long tradition of resistance." "Absolutely right," Gilbert added. "To have a past is to have history. It means we also have a future."

Michael Kimmel, a former music critic for the *Santa Cruz Express*, teaches at Rutgers University.



# Didion

Continued from preceding page  
wretched of the earth began to fight. No amount of talk about progressive nuns, free and fair elections, human rights progress or accelerating land reform will get us off this hook, or those hooks. The war in El Salvador is a bitter class war, with Cold War dimensions and entanglements. How could it be anything but pitiless?

The beginning of wisdom, I suspect, is to stop talking and thinking as if it's all "intractable"—still less as if it's all some exotic fantasy by Marquez, social realist though he may be. Reagan is right—El Salvador is an American responsibility (more in the front yard than the back). The socialist victory, if it comes, will be as grim as the forces that for so long have necessitated it. But the time to write a book of pure bewildered outrage would have been 50 years ago.

Christopher Hitchens is *The Nation's* Washington correspondent.

# CALENDAR

Use the calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$20.00 for one insertion, \$30.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **Beth Maschiot**.

## CHICAGO, IL

### April 15-16

"Women Making History: Women's Work, Women's Culture" will be presented by the University of Illinois-Chicago Women's Studies Program. Designed for history teachers and women in community and labor organizations, the conference will introduce new resources on women's history and explore the connections between women's history and political action. For registration information, call (312) 996-5236.

### April 16

You are invited to a special showing of *Dark Circle*, a film portrait of the nuclear age, on Saturday at the Varsity Theater in Evanston. The showing is a benefit for *In These Times* newspaper and the filmmakers, Judy

Irving and Chris Beaver. There will be a discussion after the showing with director Chris Beaver and a special guest. The showing is at 2:00 p.m. The Varsity Theater is located at 1710 Sherman. Tickets are available in advance at the theater or at *In These Times*, 1300 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago 60657. Tickets will also be available at the box office on the day of the performance.

### May 1

The Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty invites you to a special showing of the William Friedkin film that was never shown publicly until this year, *The People vs. Paul Crump*, 3:00 p.m., Facets Multimedia 1517 W. Fullerton. \$12.50 tax deductible donation. Meet our special guests at a reception following the film: Mrs. Lonie Crump (Paul Crump's mother) and Elmer Gertz and Donald Rothschild (Paul Crump's attorneys). For more information, contact Sandy Bietila or Mary Alice Rankin: (312) 427-7330.

## BERKELEY, CA

### April 22-24

West Coast Conference on Union Democracy, UIC Law School, Berkeley

and Chris Beaver. Strengthening the rights of workers to control unions. Speakers: Tony Mazzocchi, Joe Rauh, "Chip" Yablonski, Victor Reuther, others. Participants from the west, British Columbia, Alaska, including: autoworkers, painters, teamsters, carpenters, electricians, public workers, etc. For information: Association for Union Democracy, 30 Third Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217. (212) 855-6650.

## NEW YORK, NY

### April 24

Celebrate 46th Anniversary Veterans Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Sunday, 12 noon, Statler Hotel, NYC. Hear Tom Wicker, Associate Editor *New York Times*; Sister Benedicta O.S.H. (Episcopalian nun); Martha Schlamme, actress-singer; Steve Nelson and Henry Foner call for nuclear freeze, against U.S. intervention in El Salvador. Admission, dinner \$20. Send check to VALB, Suite 239, 799 Broadway, NYC 10003. Or call OR4-5552.

## RALLIES

### April 24

Boston, MA, Atlanta, GA, Madison,

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# France

Continued from page 7

government for giving "priority to external credibility, in other words to the respect for an economic logic contrary to our project." The Finance Ministry, Mandrin said, was the same as ever and constantly tried "to avoid the central question posed by the left's arrival in office: is it possible, how and in what conditions, to program an increase in production in France while almost everywhere else the political and economic current is in the opposite direction?"

The government aligned itself with the finance ministry "by refusing to freeze certain prices as of autumn 1981, by giving a certain priority to decentralization over nationalizations, by not immediately hastening to take all intellectual and financial means to enable the public sector to play a motor role in the economy and to shift investments in favor of productive industry as a whole, by sometimes seeming to subordinate the major orien-

tations of its economic policy to the judgment of foreign central banks and the forever losing wager of worldwide economic recovery."

The CERES people insist that France had the means to pursue a determined re-industrialization policy without resorting to protectionism, isolationism or the "Albanian autarky" its adversaries accuse it of seeking. On the surface this seems plausible, but only if there were strong domestic popular support, and the faith and will for such a policy never were present. As CERES is first to point out, the "first left" had lost the ideological battle in France before Mitterrand was elected—indeed, this may have been the condition for his majority. The "first left" no longer seemed a threat.

## Soured working class.

The political strength of the "first left" has always rested on the vigor of the working-class movement. That movement is now sinking into despondency. The most significant fact emerging from analysis of the March municipal elections is that the trend for working-class voters to shift from the Communists to the Socialists has stop-

ped. When Communist Party (CP) militants were still in the streets and cafes, selling *Humanite* and defending the party positions, people expressed their differences with them by voting Socialist. But the CP militants are disappearing, and the Socialist Party has no militant structure to replace them.

In Paris and other urban centers, many of the working-class voters who have turned away from the CP abstained from voting in the elections or took a leap to the far right. Internationalism had long been abandoned by the left parties, and in the weeks leading up to the municipal elections TV screens were full of reports of auto plant strikes suggesting that Arab workers were ruining "our" auto industry. Socialists and Communists alike were defeated for the first time in all of the working-class strongholds of northeast Paris, while the far-right nationalist Le Pen won 12 percent of the vote in one of its boroughs by campaigning to send the immigrants back to where they came from.

While political leaders rivet their attention on the riddles of economic crisis management, a whole working-class political culture may be turning sour. ■

# Mexico

Continued from page 16

ued political activity by circulating leaflets against the sexual education taught in state schools, but political repression and family pressure forced most into an insular life of churchgoing and tending children. Although most of them may say they are dissatisfied living traditional female lives, modern feminism attracts no following.

"Feminism is the work of the devil," said one.

"Those people are taught by the Bolsheviks to exercise free love and renounce God," echoed another.

However, all the women defiantly remember those days, eager to tell stories and show brittle newspaper articles.

"It's been a letdown since the movement ended," de Alba explained. "Those were certainly the best days I've ever seen." ■

Judith Matloff works for a wire service in Mexico City.

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JERZY KOSINSKI: *Literary Alarm-clock* by Dr. Byron L. Sherwin, the first comprehensive study of Kosinski's life and work. \$5.95. Cabala Press, 2421 W. Pratt, Chicago, IL 60645.

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# WOMEN WARRIORS

The reactionary Cristero rebellion of the 1920s was spearheaded by the women of Mexico.

By Judith Matloff

**N**EARLY 60 YEARS HAVE passed since 88-year-old Agripina Montes and 25,000 other Mexican women made explosives, wielded rifles and engaged in espionage during Mexico's Cristero War.

And like many other Cristero women who were a part of the Cristero rebellion, Montes—once a colonel—cherishes memories of those days. She still wears her combat boots and colonel's badge and plays Chinese checkers nightly to "keep the old strategy straight."

In the minds of many Mexicans, the 1926-29 Cristero Movement—the first big challenge to the Mexican Revolution—was led by Catholic fanatics who overreacted when the government outlawed public worship and allowed only one priest per 10,000 persons.

But few realize that these politically conservative and pious guerrillas—who revolted in Mexico's central western states partly because the Revolution's agrarian reforms passed them by—mobilized more women warriors, spies and propagandists than any other social movement in the country's history.

"It's ironic that women were so prominent in such a reactionary movement," says Cristero Movement historian Alicia Olivera Sedano de Bonfil. "Women in the radical Mexican Revolution just did washing and cooking in the camps while Cristero women planned maneuvers."

According to several Cristero survivors interviewed recently, women were the first to declare war and served as the movement's backbone, pushing their men into battle.

"We men only fought to make the women happy," said former Cristero General Jose Gutierrez.

The kind of female participation varied according to class. Middle-class matrons of the National Union of Catholic Ladies dropped their charity work and bake sales to organize anti-government demonstrations, "safe houses," underground churches and makeshift hospitals for Cristero fighters.

But most of the Cristero women were lower-class shop girls and school teachers from Guadalajara, Mexico City and Colima, who as members of the St. Joan of Arc Women's Brigades masterminded Cristero espionage and gun-running. Sworn to secrecy, the Women's Brigades members flirted with government soldiers for military secrets, transported ammunition under their skirts and wrote secret messages in lemon juice.

Each of the 26 Women's Brigades colonels was assigned to collaborate with a

male commander. But even more active than the Catholic Ladies and Women's Brigades were the handful of women like Montes who actually commanded male forces.

Why did women rise so high in the Cristero ranks?

Several historians and anthropologists chalk up the active presence of women in the movement to the matriarchal society of the Cristero states of Jalisco, Guanajuato and Michoacan, where even today the women's strong wills are famed throughout Mexico.

Others, like Gutierrez, say women fiercely defended the Church because it—along with the kitchen, parlor and, occasionally, factories—made up their entire chaperoned universe.

But Marina de Alba, a Women's Brigade veteran who now lives in Guadalajara, has another explanation.

"We were bored stiff," she says. "The movement let us do more than embroider or go to Mass. We went out at night, traveled, met men, had adventures."

Today many of those Cristero women are old and sick, their historical roles forgotten by family members and neighbors. Carmen Macias, the brave master-

Illustrations from  
*The Popular Arts of Mexico*

mind of the Women's Brigades who incited fear in government soldiers, is now deaf and confined to a wheelchair in Guadalajara. Her neighbors just call her "the crazy woman" and don't know about the role she played in their country's history.

And Montes, who once commanded hundreds of men and organized uprisings, now shuffles painfully around her spartan Queretaro home, which is adorned only by postcards of Mexican cathedrals. Recently, after attending nightly Mass, she recounted "those days" over a bottle of rum.

"I slept with 1,000 men by my side," she said winking. "I was the best shot in Queretaro and one of the few who owned a car. So they asked me to lead them."

"She was a terror, one of the boys," Gutierrez says admiringly of Montes. "We couldn't have fought without those women."

## Macho backlash.

But despite the admiration of men like himself, Gutierrez says, most male political leaders welcomed the women into the ranks only if they could be controlled. He says that as the Women's Brigades grew autonomous—making arms shipments and writing leaflets without direction from the central male leadership—male chieftains set out to destroy the Brigades. The men forbade the group to exist as a secret society and they dispatched communiques condemning the women.

"We can't accept this lack of obedience from women," said a male leader at the time.

"They were just a bunch of machos," says Marina de Alba. "They got scared that a bunch of women were running the show."

Despite anger at this slap from above, women continued to work with the movement. But their sagging spirits and restricted responsibilities cut into the movement's effectiveness.

Even after the Cristero forces were squashed and the conflict settled in 1929—with the help of U.S. Ambassador Dwight Morrow—sporadic rebellions surged for six years. Many women went underground in this period to escape the fate of other activists who were sentenced to decade-long terms in the harsh Islas Marias penal colony or city jails.

"Sleeping in the bush and listening to gunshot was hard, but being in that cold jail was hell," says Montes about her stint in a Mexico City prison.

Another challenge and hardship facing these women was a return to traditional domestic roles. Of 10 Cristero women surveyed, more than half married and raised families.

"We had no choice but to be mothers and wives," said de Alba. "Even the priests who urged us to join the struggle rejected us as brazen hussies when the movement ended."

Some Cristero women fighters continued.

*Continued on page 15*

